

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN  
VISWA BHARATI  
LIBRARY

9242

T 92





**A SHORT LIFE OF  
MARK TWAIN**

**ABRIDGED FROM "MARK TWAIN—A BIOGRAPHY"**









MARK TWAIN AT SEVENTY

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

---

A SHORT LIFE OF  
MARK TWAIN

*By the author of "Mark Twain: A Biography,"  
"Moments with Mark Twain," etc.*



GARDEN CITY PUBLISHING CO., INC.  
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

**A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN**

Copyright, 1920, by Harper & Brothers  
Printed in the United States of America

# CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	JOEY AND JANE CLEMENS . . . . .	1
II.	A LOWLY BIRTHPLACE . . . . .	4
III.	A PRIMITIVE CHILDHOOD . . . . .	7
IV.	HANNIBAL AND THE FARM . . . . .	10
V.	AN OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOL . . . . .	14
VI.	THE REAL TOM SAWYER . . . . .	17
VII.	THE END OF A SAD LIFE . . . . .	28
VIII.	SAM CLEMENS, PRINTER'S APPRENTICE . . . . .	31
IX.	LITERARY BEGINNINGS . . . . .	34
X.	A JOURNEY IN THE WORLD . . . . .	37
XI.	KEOKUK . . . . .	42
XII.	THE RETURN OF THE OLD AMBITION . . . . .	46
XIII.	THE CUB PILOT . . . . .	51
XIV.	PILOT SAMUEL CLEMENS . . . . .	62
XV.	SAM CLEMENS, SOLDIER . . . . .	69
XVI.	THE PIONEER . . . . .	72
XVII.	A COMSTOCK JOURNALIST . . . . .	82
XVIII.	MARK TWAIN . . . . .	86
XIX.	ARTEMUS WARD . . . . .	90
XX.	MARK TWAIN MAKES A SPEECH . . . . .	93
XXI.	AT THE GOLDEN GATE . . . . .	96
XXII.	M. T. GOES MINING AND FINDS A NUGGET . . . . .	100
XXIII.	THE JUMPING FROG, AND HAWAII . . . . .	106
XXIV.	MARK TWAIN, LECTURER . . . . .	112
XXV.	THE WANDERER RETURNS . . . . .	117
XXVI.	THE "QUAKER CITY" EXCURSION . . . . .	124
XXVII.	A TIME OF GREAT BEGINNINGS . . . . .	128
XXVIII.	A VISIT TO ELMIRA . . . . .	133
XXIX.	A NEW BOOK, A NEW PAPER, AND A WEDDING . . . . .	138
XXX.	THE YEAR AT BUFFALO . . . . .	144
XXXI.	QUARRY FARM AND HARTFORD . . . . .	147
XXXII.	A TRIP TO ENGLAND . . . . .	151
XXXIII.	"THE GILDED AGE" . . . . .	154
XXXIV.	BACK IN LONDON AGAIN . . . . .	157
XXXV.	TOM SAWYER, SELLERS, AND THE NEW HOME . . . . .	160

# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
XXXVI. WALK TO BOSTON, "OLD TIMES ON THE MISS."	164
XXXVII. "HUCK FINN"—"AH SIN"—"PRINCE AND PAUPER"	168
XXXVIII. AN ENTERTAINER AT HOME . . . . .	172
XXXIX. TRAMPING ABROAD WITH TWICHEL . . . . .	175
XL. "PRINCE AND PAUPER," OTHER ENTERPRISES .	181
XLI. LIFE AT QUARRY FARM—GENERAL GRANT . .	185
XLII. MANY PROSPECTS—BACK TO THE RIVER . . .	189
XLIII. THE MISSISSIPPI BOOK—END OF "HUCK" . .	196
XLIV. A PLAY WITH HOWELLS, READING WITH CABLE	200
XLV. MARK TWAIN, PUBLISHER TO U. S. GRANT . .	205
XLVI. CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO., AND THE MACHINE	213
XLVII. KIPLING COMES TO ELMIRA . . . . .	218
XLVIII. PUBLISHING THE "YANKEE"—LEAVING HARTFORD	220
XLIX. EUROPEAN WANDERINGS . . . . .	224
L. A WINTER AND SUMMER IN GERMANY . . . .	228
LI. BEGINNING "JOAN OF ARC" . . . . .	232
LII. MR. ROGERS . . . . .	237
LIII. THE END OF BUSINESS, AND OF "JOAN" . . .	240
LIV. TOURING AROUND THE WORLD . . . . .	243
LV. THE PASSING OF SUSY . . . . .	246
LVI. THE WINTER IN LONDON . . . . .	249
LVII. MARK TWAIN PAYS HIS DEBTS . . . . .	252
LVIII. SOCIAL VIENNA, AND HOME . . . . .	255
LIX. A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY . . . . .	259
LX. "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE" . . . . .	264
LXI. YORK HARBOR AND RIVERDALE . . . . .	271
LXII. THE PASSING OF OLIVIA CLEMENS . . . . .	274
LXIII. REMAKING A HOME . . . . .	278
LXIV. MARK TWAIN AT "PIER 70" . . . . .	281
LXV. MARK TWAIN ARRANGES FOR HIS BIOGRAPHY .	284
LXVI. WORKING WITH MARK TWAIN . . . . .	292
LXVII. ON THE SLOPES OF MONADNOCK . . . . .	298
LXVIII. PLAYING BILLIARDS WITH MARK TWAIN . . .	301
LXIX. DAYS OF CLOSER INTIMACY . . . . .	308
LXX. THE DEGREE FROM OXFORD . . . . .	313
LXXI. THE NEW HOME . . . . .	316
LXXII. LIFE AT "STORMFIELD" . . . . .	321
LXXIII. THE BEGINNING OF THE END . . . . .	324
LXXIV. THE DEATH OF JEAN . . . . .	327
LXXV. THE RETURN TO BERMUDA AND HOME . . . .	333
LXXVI. THE ENVIED ESTATE . . . . .	341

# A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

## I

JOHN AND JANE CLEMENS

ON the afternoon of a spring day in the year 1835 there appeared in the little village of Florida, Missouri, a family of six persons, arriving after a long journey from that dim region known as the Knobs of East Tennessee. They had followed a circuitous way, and had come in a manner of travel at present almost unknown. From their last home, a log cabin in the little settlement of Pall Mall on the banks of Wolf River, they had journeyed to the Ohio in a big old-fashioned barouche, with the oldest boy, Orion, and Jennie, a slave girl, as outriders. At Louisville the travelers had taken a steamboat for St. Louis, at which point they had resumed their overland journey.

John Marshall Clemens and his wife, having put their dwindling fortunes behind them and burned their bridges, had come to make a new beginning



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

in a new land. With the parents were four children: Orion, whose age was ten; Pamela, who was eight; Margaret, age five, and baby Benjamin, two years old. John Clemens had come of good Virginia stock and had been educated as lawyer, but his practice had not been successful and of late years he had engaged in a meager country commerce which had grown still more meager and more primitive as the years passed. Postmaster of Pall Mall, he was usually addressed as "Squire" or "Judge" in that region. His wife, who had been Jane Lampton, was of fine Kentucky family, a belle in her youth. They had never prospered and had drifted from one small environment to another, always smaller and less encouraging. Readers of the first chapter of *The Gilded Age* may get a fairly correct picture of their general circumstances at the moment of their migration. Relatives of Jane Lampton, most of them more prosperous, had settled in Missouri, and one of them, a brother-in-law named John Quarles, had written enthusiastically of the prospects. Another relative there was cousin James Lampton, one day to be immortalized in fiction and drama as Col. Mulberry Sellers, that lovely visionary of *The Gilded Age*. John Clemens was himself a dreamer, and even his more practical wife probably had no wish to oppose a move which might improve their fortunes and certainly could not damage them. In Florida there would at least be the association of her own people.

John Clemens was by no means a weak man, but he had somehow never been suited to conditions, and

## JOHN AND JANE CLEMENS

his health had been always uncertain. His standards of right and wrong had not weakened, but his business judgment was poor. Ten years of a losing fight had left him, at thirty-six, old for his years, out of tune with life and nearly out of heart. Nor is it to be wondered at that the features of Jane Clemens had grown sharper and her manner graver as the years passed. So it came about that these two had determined to make a new start in the world. They had sold what they could sell and put what they could carry into the big barouche, a relic of their earlier fortunes, leaving behind them only a great tract of land which John Clemens had acquired at a few cents an acre, believing that it would one day bring wealth to their children. This was the famous Tennessee land, familiar to every reader of *The Gilded Age*.

## II

### A LOWLY BIRTHP

THE little town of Florida, on the banks of the Salt River, was a village of about a score of houses, most of them tiny, one-story frame or log structures. It was almost as far from the world as an Indian settlement in the wilds of British Columbia would be to-day. The telegraph did not yet exist; the railroad, still a wonder of the East, had not ventured across the Alleghenies. The Mississippi River, the great thoroughfare of the West, and St. Louis with its boasted population of ten thousand, were reachable only after days of travel over what were probably as wretched roads as any in the world. Eastern Missouri could not properly be called frontier, for it had long been settled by slave-holding farmers, and some of the Florida houses were already old and dilapidated. But it was remote, unenlightened, unprosperous—probably no great improvement upon the village among the Knobs of Tennessee.

But John Clemens was a dreamer and was surrounded by others of his kind—the Quarles and the Lampton stock. In fancy they saw the little Salt River with locks and dams made navigable to the Mississippi; they pictured Florida grown into a thriving inland port of trade. Clemens joined his

## A LOWLY BIRTHPLACE

brother-in-law in business, became his partner, in fact, and turned a friendlier face to the future. He did not immediately build himself a home, but set up a few necessary belongings in a rented house, a humble one-story affair, of a sort still common to the South and West, comfortable enough for those restricted days. The little house, old and weather-beaten now, has become a place of pilgrimage to those who find their way to that inaccessible hamlet, as yet unreached by railroad and to which the boats never came. John Clemens and his family still occupied it in November, 1835, and it was there on the 30th of that month that the child who would one day be called Mark Twain made his feeble and premature entrance into the world. It happened—and this will seem curious in the later event—that on the night of his arrival Halley's comet became visible in the sky, a conjunction as remote as possible from any consideration of the moment. No one in Florida cared in the least for Halley's comet and few outside of the immediate family cared for a puny, seven months' infant with a wavering promise of life. It would have been no great sorrow, perhaps, if he had retired to the unknown as unceremoniously as he came. Certainly no one dreamed that this little wailing thing would one day dazzle the hemispheres and be honored by sages and kings. His father, however, must have looked upon him with favor, for he named him Samuel, after his own father, and added Langhorne for an old Virginia friend.

The family being now eight, including Jennie, the slave girl, found their three little rooms too small.!

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

John Clemens began the building of a new home, another one-story affair, but more commodious in its accommodations. It was completed in 1836, and in later years was sometimes mistakenly pointed out as the birthplace of Mark Twain. It has long since disappeared.

### III

#### ~~A~~ PRIMITIVE CHILDHOOD

**T**HE new baby disappointed expectations. It lived through the winter, but it was a delicate child and hardly a satisfactory one. Once, in her old age, Jane Clemens said to the man who had become world famous as Mark Twain:

"You gave me more uneasiness than any child I ever had."

"I suppose you were afraid I wouldn't live?" he suggested, thoughtfully.

She regarded him with the keen humor of her youth, which the years had never entirely conquered.

"No, afraid you would," she said. But that was only her joke, for she was the most tender-hearted creature in the world.

It was a curious childhood that little Sam Clemens had—a childhood surrounded by contradictory influences. Those earliest years in Florida were spent mainly in the companionship of his sister Margaret and his little brother Benjamin and in a daily association with slaves. All the children of that time and section played with the small negroes and were fond of them. From them they learned half-savage amusements and weird wonder tales, mainly concerned with ghosts and witches and strange conjury. The house had a great open fireplace where on

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

winter evenings Jennie, the maid, and Uncle Ned, man of all work, told tales that would send their little hearers to bed shivering with fearful delight, frightened of their shadows. Even a baby of two or three years could follow those primitive stories.

Also, impressive things sometimes happened during the day. Once little Sam and the others saw a runaway slave brought in by his six captors, who took him to an empty cabin, where they threw him on the floor and bound him with ropes. The memory of such a circumstance would last a lifetime.

John Clemens seldom devoted any time to the company of his children. He bought a book now and then, even a picture-book, but he did not join in their amusements, and rarely laughed. The problem of supplying food continued a somber one. Also, he was working on a perpetual-motion machine, which to the inventor at least was not a mirthful occupation. Jane Clemens was busy, too. Her native sense of humor survived, but it did not mellow with the years, and it was just as well to be fairly out of range when she was occupied with her employments.

The home of Uncle John Quarles was headquarters for the children. Uncle John was comparatively well-to-do, and his farm, his slaves, his great double log house were all sources of never-ending delight. Uncle John himself was a story-teller and a man of laughter. To visit at his house was for a child to be in the midst of mirth and pranks continually. There was a halo about everything that Uncle John did, the radiance that goes with great kindness, the

## A PRIMITIVE CHILDHOOD

jovial gentle-heartedness of a humane man. Sometimes when the children came for eggs he would say:

"Your hens won't lay? eh? Tell your ma to feed 'em parched corn and drive 'em uphill," and this was always a master stroke of humor to his small hearers.

The partnership of this light-hearted optimist and the grave John Clemens did not long continue. At the end of two or three years the latter opened business for himself with Orion Clemens, a pensive lad of about thirteen, as his assistant. It was a poor combination. Neither father nor son had any business ability and they acquired nothing but bad debts. The Clemens fortunes were again on the down grade. Another child, Henry, born in 1838, added a new burden. Then came sorrow. Little Margaret, nine years old, returned from school one day, dropped her books on the table, and lay down on her small bed. Her cheeks were flushed and she was soon burning with fever. She died about a week later. It was little Sam's first sight of death. This was in August, 1839, when he was not yet four years old.



## IV

### HANNIBAL AND THE FARM

**J**OHAN CLEMENS, now thoroughly sick of Florida, decided to do what a more logical reasoner would have done in the beginning. It having been demonstrated that the Salt River would never be made navigable and that Florida would never be a city, he concluded to go to a river where the boats were already running and to a city that was at least begun. He selected Hannibal, loaded his family and effects into wagons, and was soon on the way. Discouraged, no doubt, he was never entirely without hope. He still owned the great tract of land in East Tennessee, and he believed that it would one day provide a fortune for his children. In dark moments he had been tempted to let it go at one small figure or another, but had never quite consented.

"We will struggle along somehow, Jane," he would say. "We will not throw away the children's fortune."

In time the promise of the Tennessee land was about all the future held that seemed worth while.

Hannibal on the Mississippi was a great improvement on Florida, in that it was larger, considerably more alive, and made at least a show of manufacturing. A slave town, it could hardly be lively, though it had its lively moments when steamboats

## HANNIBAL AND THE FARM

to or from St. Louis touched the wharf and all the idlers along the river front awoke and collected around the landing stage, to watch operations, sometimes to assist in them. The little "white town drowsing in the sunshine" was handsomely situated. It ~~was~~ circled by bluffs and there was a fine hill to the northward, overlooking the river. In the midstream were islands, and beyond them the green, wooded shores of Illinois. Somewhat below town there was a most interesting cave, with stalactites and dark, unexplored passages. All of these things would gain celebrity, by and by, through what was, perhaps, in that far day, the most unnoticed thing in Hannibal—a frail child of four, little Sam Clemens—an unimportant unit of a family that had found shelter in a part of a house on Hill Street, known as the Pavey Hotel. The cave would become Tom Sawyer's cave; the island, Tom Sawyer's island; Holliday's Hill would be remembered as his playground, and upon it would be placed a bronze statue looking out upon the river that would always be associated with the name of Mark Twain.

John Clemens had moved a portion of his merchandise from Florida, and now established himself in a small way, with his son Orion in a new suit of clothes, as clerk. The new clothes stirred Orion's ambition for a time, but business was slow and he was usually dreaming or reading, and customers were not well served. By his father's advice he presently became a printer's apprentice in the office of the *Hannibal Journal*. Orion Clemens was one of those gentle souls that all men love and few care

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

to emulate. He had no tendency to bad habits or unworthy pursuits; indeed, no positive traits of any sort. Full of whims and fancies, unstable as water, he was swayed by every passing emotion. A life like his is bound to be a succession of extremes—alternate periods of supreme ~~exaltation~~ and despair. We are dwelling a moment here on Mark Twain's brother because the two were to be importantly associated in the years to come.

Of the other children, Pamela, now twelve, and Benjamin, seven, were put to school. Henry was still a baby. Little Sam was the least promising of the flock. He remained delicate, and developed little beyond a tendency to mischief. He was queer and fanciful and would run away if not watched—always in the direction of the river. He walked in his sleep, and often the rest of the household got up to find him fretting with cold in some dark corner. He caught every disease that went about, and seemed always anxious to acquire new ones.

We have already told of the delight of the Clemens children in Uncle John Quarles's farm. To little Sam it was probably a life-saver. His mother generally took him back there a part of each summer, and with his small cousin Tabitha, his own age, he wandered over that magic domain, finding new marvels everywhere. The farmhouse itself stood in the middle of the large yard. It consisted of two buildings with a roofed-over passage between, where in summer the lavish Southern meals were served, brought on in huge dishes by negroes and left for each one to help himself.

## HANNIBAL AND THE FARM

There were plenty of diversions—horses to ride to and from the field, ox wagons to go jouncing in when they had dumped their heavy loads. Then in the evening the children went with the black woman for the cows, and little Sam, wild-headed and impetuous, raced hither and thither in sudden ecstasies, venting his emotions in leaps and shrieks, followed by spasms of laughter as he lay rolling on the grass.

Through those far-off, warm, golden summer days little Sam romped and dreamed and grew. His mother generally kept him there until the late fall, when the chilly evenings made the family gather around the wide, blazing fireplace. Sixty years later he wrote:

I can see the room yet with perfect clearness. I can see all its belongings, all its details; the family room of the house, with the trundle bed in one corner and the spinning-wheel in the other—a wheel whose rising and falling wail, heard from a distance, was the mournfulest of all sounds to me, and made me homesick and low-spirited, and filled my atmosphere with wandering spirits of the dead . . . the lazy cat spread out on the rough hearthstones, the drowsy dogs braced against the jambs, blinking; my aunt in one chimney corner and my uncle in the other, smoking his corncob pipe.

Truly those were golden days.

## AN OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOL

IT was after little Sam's first summer at the farm that his school days began. He was now five, and his mother announced that she was going to pay somebody to take him off her hands for a part of each day. She declared it took all the rest of the family to watch him, to keep him from getting drowned. He did, in fact, achieve the first of his "nine narrow escapes from drowning" about this time. A slave girl one day pulled him out of a deep hole in Bear Creek and brought him home in a limp, unpromising condition. When he was restored his mother said:

"I guess there wasn't much danger. People born to be hanged are safe in water."

Jane Clemens was the original of Aunt Polly in the story of Tom Sawyer—an outspoken, keen-witted, charitable woman. She had a heart full of pity, especially for dumb creatures. She refused to kill even flies, and punished the cat for catching mice. She could be firm with her children, however, when occasion required, and recognized their faults. Little Sam was inclined to elaborate largely on fact. A neighbor once said to her:

"You don't believe anything that child says, I hope?"

## AN OLD-FASHIONED SCHOOL

She answered, placidly: "Oh yes. I know his average. I discount him ninety per cent.; the rest is pure gold."

The school selected for little Sam was on Main Street, and kept by Mrs. E. Horr. There were pupils of all ages and the curriculum had more range than variety. Mrs. Horr received twenty-five cents a week for each pupil and opened her school with prayer; after which came a chapter from the Bible and the rules of conduct. Little Sam did not think much of the rules of conduct. He fractured them once or twice, and received a warning. It was not sufficient, and in the midst of some transgression he was suddenly ordered by Mrs. Horr to go out and bring a stick for his own correction. This was a solemn undertaking. He went outside and looked around, but could find nothing that seemed suitable. Even the smallest switches had a keen, disagreeable look.

Then Providence seemed to send an inspiration. There was a cooper shop across the street, with a good many shavings outside, one of them had blown across and lay just in front of him. Sam picked it up and, entering the schoolroom, meekly handed it to Mrs. Horr. So far as known it is the first example of that humor which would one day win fame for the small culprit.

It was not an entire success. Mrs. Horr could not afford to be lax in her discipline. A schoolmate was dispatched for some more competent implement, and little Sam went home that night with a strong distaste for school, dreaming of a day when he would

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

be a pirate or an Indian and scalp or drown such people as Mrs. Horr.

He went back to school, but he never learned to like it. When the days of early summer returned, when from his desk he could see the sunshine lighting the soft green of Holliday's Hill with the glint of the river and the purple distance beyond, it seemed to him that to be shut up with a spelling book and a cross teacher was more than he could bear. Among the records preserved from that far-off time there remains a yellow slip whereon in neat, prim penmanship is written:

### MISS PAMELA CLEMENS

Has won the love of her teachers and schoolmates by her amiable deportment and faithful application to her various studies.

E. HERR, *Teacher*.

Diligent search has failed to reveal any such testimonial for little Sam. He must have learned something, however, and was soon considered a good speller for his years. His spelling came as a gift, and if he won the affection of his teacher we may believe it was mainly through his natural endowments.

## VI

### REAL TOM SAWYER

NOTHING more than temporary prosperity ever came to John Clemens. He became a justice of the peace in Hannibal; he practiced law; he tried to conduct a business. Nevertheless, something more than a year after his arrival he was obliged to part with Jennie, the slave girl, to provide the family with funds and to satisfy creditors.

Parting with Jennie was a matter of deep sorrow to them all. Slavery was sanctioned by custom and sanctified by the pulpit, but this and other similar transactions must have made a deep impression on a sensitive, imaginative little boy. There never was a fiercer abolitionist than Mark Twain, and the seed was doubtless of that early sowing when the abuses of slavery were all about him. He did not remember, in later years, that he had ever seen a slave auction, but he added:

"I am suspicious that it is because the thing was a commonplace spectacle and not an uncommon or impressive one. I do vividly remember seeing a dozen black men and women, chained together, lying in a group on the pavement, waiting shipment to a Southern slave market. They had the saddest faces I ever saw."

Jennie brought a good price, and John Clemens's



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

circumstances were easier for a time. Then business appears to have improved and he became a property owner. But then came another crisis, a descent of the creditors; everything, even to the cow, the household furniture, the silver forks and spoons, was swept away. The creditors took ~~everything~~ everything but the Tennessee land, which they probably considered worthless. John Clemens made a trip to Tennessee, hoping to collect some old debts and to raise money on the land. He was unsuccessful. In a sort of autobiography which Orion Clemens wrote in later years he says that his father came home in despair, not knowing which way to turn.

"I am not able to dig in the streets," he declared; and Orion adds, "I can see yet the hopeless expression in his face."

It was at this dark period that death came again to the Clemens household. Little Benjamin, the family favorite, an amiable lad of ten, one day sickened, and died within a week. Little Sam long remembered the picture of his parents' grief. Orion recalls that they kissed each other, something hitherto unknown.

Judge Clemens went back to his law practice. They scraped together a few belongings and Mrs. Clemens took some boarders. Orion, by this time a journeyman printer, obtained a place in St. Louis and aided in the family support.

There came now another period of better times. Legal fees were larger and more frequent. Within another two years Judge Clemens appears to have been in favorable circumstances again—able, at

## THE REAL TOM SAWYER

least, to invest some money in silkworm culture, and lose it; also to buy a piano for Pamela—a good investment, as it proved later—and to build a modest house on Hill Street, the one known to-day as the Mark Twain home. This was in 1844, when little Sam was nine-years old. The family had made one or two other moves in the meantime, but the identity of these temporary residences has not been established.

It was about this time that the boyhood of Samuel Clemens may be said to have begun—the Tom Sawyer days which would by and by be turned into classic reading for future generations. Heretofore, he had been just a child, wild and mischievous, but still a child—a delicate little lad to be worried over, mothered, or spanked and put to bed. Now at nine he had acquired health, with the ability to look out for himself, and a knowledge of the world considerably in advance of his years. The summers on the farm had provided the health; life in a river slave town had furnished the experience.

He had seen most of the round of life; there was little that he did not know. He had even seen men killed—a slave struck down with a piece of slag, a drunken Welshman shot by a woman defending her home, and an old man shot down on Main Street at noonday. Sam saw them carry the old man home, and, following with other boys, saw them lay him on a bed and spread on his breast an open family Bible which looked as heavy as an anvil. The little boy thought if he could only take that great load away the poor dying man would not

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

breathe so heavily. Education is acquired rapidly amid such happenings as these.

Sam did not regard them as matters of education. They terrified him and got into his dreams. He set them down as warnings sent to furnish him with a taste for a better life. He felt that ~~that~~ was his conscience that made those things torture him. That was his mother's idea, and he had a high respect for her moral opinions. He had once seen her defy a drunken Corsican who was pursuing his daughter with a rope's end. She gave protection to the fugitive and shamed and derided the pursuer until he gave up the rope and slunk off, crestfallen and conquered. Anyone who could do that must have a perfect conscience, Sam thought. In the darkness he would say his prayers, especially when a thunderstorm was coming, and resolve upon an improved life. He detested Sunday school, and his brother Orion, who was religious, once threatened to drag him there by the collar. As the thunder got louder Sam decided that he loved Sunday school and would go next time without being invited.

Happily, there were pleasanter things and days. There were picnics, ferryboat excursions, days of fishing and roaming the woods with his young companions. There was the cave with its marvels, and Bear Creek, where, after repeated accidents, he learned to swim. In the course of his education he saw two playmates drown, and was himself repeatedly dragged ashore, more dead than alive. In the end he conquered; he could swim better than any boy in town of his age.

## THE REAL TOM SAWYER

The mile-wide river that fronted the town gave him greatest happiness. It was the path of adventure, the gateway to the world. Its steamboats with their brilliant life that seemed a part of some enchantment; its great, slow-moving rafts—these things provided him with a dream world of his own devising. He would venture out on the resistless current in any stray boat when he was barely strong enough to lift an oar; his hunger for the life aboard the steamers was a passion.

"You can hardly imagine what it meant," he reflected, once, "to a boy shut in as we were, to see those steamboats pass up and down and never take a trip on them."

Once he slipped aboard a steamer and concealed himself under a boat. But he was discovered before they reached the next town and sent home by a relative who happened to live there.

Mark Twain did not remember when he learned to smoke, but it was probably about this time. Tobacco was in common use by all ages and both sexes. In the country districts boys, and even girls, walked to school smoking pipes. Sam picked up certain strong, expressive words, and said them, sometimes, when Jane Clemens was out of hearing. He had a notion that she would skin him alive if she heard him swear. His education had doubtful spots in it, but it included caution.

He was not a particularly attractive lad. He was somewhat undersized and his head seemed too large for his body. His features were rather prominent; his great ruck of sandy hair he plastered down to

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

keep from curling. He did not talk much and he spoke in a curious, drawling fashion, slow even for the South. Neither was he regarded as brilliant, yet, somehow, whenever Sam began to speak every playmate stopped to listen. They found what he said quaintly amusing, and he generally had some interesting plan. The younger brother, Henry Clemens, was handsomer and apparently brighter—a lovable, obedient little fellow, whom the malicious Sam took delight in teasing. Henry was not without fault, but Sam, because of a bad reputation, was likely to get the punishment for the misdoings of both. Sometimes he would say to his mother:

“Yes, no matter what it is, I am always the one to get punished,” and Jane Clemens would answer, “Well, Sam, if you didn’t deserve it for that, you did for something else.”

Henry Clemens became the Sid of Tom Sawyer, though Henry was in every way a finer character than Sid. His brother Sam loved him and in the main was his faithful champion.

The home incidents in Tom Sawyer, most of them, really happened. Sam Clemens did clod Henry for getting him into trouble once when he came home from swimming; he did inveigle a lot of boys into whitewashing a fence for him; he did give Pain-killer to Peter the cat.

Tom Sawyer’s boon companions were Joe Harper and Huckleberry Finn. These two in life were John Briggs and Tom Blankenship. John Briggs was a lively, good-hearted boy and Tom Blankenship was the son of an indigent family, exactly as pictured in

## THE REAL TOM SAWYER

the story: a ruin of rags, a river rat—kind of heart and possessing the priceless boon of absolute freedom. He could come and go as he chose; he never had to ask permission; he never went to school; he could sleep anywhere. He was the envy of every boy in town for these reasons and because he knew everything concerning hunting and fishing and all manner of signs and hoodoo charms. Sam Clemens adopted him outright, and the home of the Blankenships, a poor barn of a place, was his favorite resort. The father, old drunken Ben Blankenship, never dreamed that pieces of his house would be carried off as relics because of the literary fame of his son, the immortal Huck of fiction. The boys had a set of signals, catcalls and the like, and many was the night that Sam Clemens, ten or eleven years old, would climb out of the window to the single-story roof, and down a little arbor and a flight of steps, to join his companions in some such excursion as those familiar to all readers of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. No orchard or melon patch was entirely safe from them; no rowboat was so securely tied or carefully concealed that they were not likely to borrow it when navigation was a part of their plan.

Their chief diversions were fishing and swimming. Often they breasted the resistless Mississippi current and swam entirely across to one of the islands, where they frolicked for a time on the sand, then swam back, a good half-mile each way. It was a hardy life they led, and it is not remembered that they ever did any serious damage, though they came perilously near it sometimes.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

If this unhallowed band had a leader, it was Sam Clemens. He was the youngest of the lot, but he had more ideas and more dash in carrying them out. The others were always ready to listen to him and to follow his projects. He gloried in this, for, like Sawyer, he had a passion for the center of the stage, a love of the spectacular that never wholly died. It seems almost a pity that in those far-off, barefoot days he could not have looked down the years and caught a glimpse of his splendid destiny.

His dreams were of another sort. He pictured himself as a pirate or a bandit, sometimes, but more often as a steamboat pilot. To be a pilot was the permanent ambition of every boy along the great river. Sam and his band played at being all of these things. The cave, two miles below town, was a valuable asset in these games. As a pirate and bandit den it could not be surpassed. It was a real cave, with vaulted, spacious chambers that led away into the earth's black silences. With its long corridors and remote hiding places it contained everything that a romantic boy could love or long for. In the story of Tom Sawyer, Indian Joe dies in the cave. He did not die there in real life, but was lost there once, and was living on bats when they found him. Joe in real life was about as pictured in the story, and when one night he did die there came up a thunderstorm so terrific that Sam Clemens at home in bed was certain that Satan had come in person for the half-breed's wicked soul. He covered his head and said his prayers with fearful earnestness

## THE REAL TOM SAWYER

lest the evil one might conclude to save another trip by taking him along.

Tom Blankenship was the original of Huckleberry Finn, but his brother Ben, several years older, was also drawn upon for that creation. Ben was not a pleasant character and was pretty disreputable. The boys dreaded and disliked him, yet somewhere within him was a strain of humanity that provided Mark Twain with an immortal episode—the sheltering of Nigger Jim.

A slave ran off from Monroe County, Missouri, and got across the river into Illinois. Ben used to fish and hunt over there in the swamps, and one day found him. It was considered a most worthy act in those days to return a runaway slave; in fact, it was a crime not to do it. Besides, there was for this one a reward of fifty dollars, a fortune to a ragged outcast, Ben Blankenship. That money and the honor he could acquire must have been tempting to the waif, but it did not outweigh his human sympathy. Instead of giving the fugitive up and claiming the reward, Ben kept him over there in the marshes all summer. The negro fished and Ben carried him scraps of other food. Then by and by it leaked out. Some woodchoppers went on a hunt for the fugitive and chased him to what is called Bird's Slough. There, trying to cross a drift, he was drowned.

Sam Clemens's associates were not all of the kind mentioned. At his school—now Mr. Cross's on the Square—there were others of a less adventurous sort. There was George Robards, the Latin scholar, and



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

his brother John, who one day made all the other boys envious by riding away with his father to California, his golden curls flying in the wind. And there was Jimmie MacDaniel, whose company was worth while, for his father was a confectioner and Jimmie brought candy to school.

Furthermore, there were a good many girls. There were Betty Ormsley and Artemesia Briggs and Mary Miller, who was nearly twice Sam's age and gave him his first broken heart.

"I believe I was as miserable as grown man could be," he said once, remembering.

But, like Tom Sawyer, Sam Clemens had one faithful sweetheart. They were one and the same. Becky Thatcher in the book was Laura Hawkins in reality. The Clemens and the Hawkins family were neighbors, and the children were playmates. Sam and Laura visited back and forth and found plenty of amusement. The boy could be tender and kind, and was always gentle in his treatment of the other sex. Once in a game of house building he accidentally let a brick fall on the little girl's finger. She wailed her sorrow, of course, but it is recorded that Sam cried much the louder and the longer of the two.

We are drifting away from the school days. They will not hold us long now. Mr. Cross's school stood about the center of the town. The Square was only a grove then, grown up with plum, hazel, and grapevines, a rare place for children. There was a spelling match every Friday afternoon, which was the only thing about school that Sam enjoyed. He could

## THE REAL TOM SAWYER

hold the floor at spelling and win compliments even from Mr. Cross, whose name must have been handed down by angels, it fitted him so well. One day Sam Clemens wrote on his slate:

Cross ~~has~~ name, and cross by nature,  
Cross jumped over an Irish potato.

It was his first literary attempt and he exposed it to John Briggs, who admired it exceedingly. John urged the author to write it on the board at noon, but the poet's ambition was more modest.

"Oh, pshaw!" said John. "I wouldn't be afraid to do it."

"I dare you to do it," said Sam.

John Briggs never took a dare, and when Mr. Cross returned from dinner Sam's fine couplet blazed at him from the blackboard. He turned, looked steadily at John Briggs; he had recognized the penmanship.

"Did you do that?" he asked, ominously.

It was a time for truth.

"Yes, sir," said John.

"Come here," and John came and paid liberally for his publishing venture.

Sam Clemens expected that the next call would be for "author," but perhaps Mr. Cross had used up his energy on John. Sam did not often escape. On the whole, he never learned to like school. He enjoyed there moments of triumph, but the rest of the time he found it prison and servitude. His release was coming, sooner than he dreamed.

## VII

### THE END OF A SAD LIFE

**J**OHAN CLEMENS, who time and again had wrecked his fortunes by devices more or less unusual, now adopted the one unfailing method of achieving disaster. He indorsed a large note for a man of good repute, and the payment of it swept him clean. A St. Louis cousin saved the Clemens home and a few scanty furnishings, including Pamela's piano. They could not afford to live in the house, and concluded a cheaper arrangement.

There was one hope left. Judge Clemens was liked and respected in the community, and believed he could be elected as clerk of the surrogate court. He received the nomination and made a personal canvass on horseback, often riding through the rain and chill of autumn, contracting a cold which lingered and weakened him. He was elected, and it seemed now as if good days were at last about to come. At the end of February he rode to the county seat to be sworn in. Returning, he was drenched by a storm of rain and sleet, arriving at last, half frozen. Pneumonia followed and in a few days it was known that his end was near. At moments he was cheerful and spoke of the wealth that lay in the Tennessee land. He said it would soon make them all rich and happy.

## THE END OF A SAD LIFE

Once he whispered, "Cling to the land—cling to the land, and wait."

Later he beckoned to Pamela, now a lovely girl of nineteen, and, putting his arm about her neck, kissed her, for the first time in years.

"Let me die," he said.

He never spoke after that. A little more and the sad, weary life was ended. This was in March, 1847. John Clemens had lived less than forty-nine years. A dreamer and a moralist, an upright man honored by all, he had never been a financier.

The disaster to the Clemens household now seemed complete. The children were dazed. Sam in particular was overwhelmed with remorse. He remembered a hundred disobedient acts that never could be undone. Seeing his anguish, his mother led him into the room where his father lay. She spoke a few comforting words and asked him to make her a promise. He flung himself into her arms.

"I will promise anything," he sobbed, "if you won't make me go to school—anything!"

His mother said, "No, Sammy, you need not go to school any more; only promise me to be a better boy; promise not to break my heart."

He promised her to be a faithful and upright man, like his father. The sense of honor and justice was already strong within him. He would not be twelve years old until November, but a promise like that would be held sacred.

The funeral was followed by readjustments. Orion returned to St. Louis. His salary of ten

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

dollars a week (good wages for those frugal days) permitted him to send three dollars weekly to the family. Pamela's piano now proved a blessing. She gave music lessons and contributed to the family fund. Pamela Clemens—the original of Cousin Mary in *Tom Sawyer*—~~was~~ a sweet and noble girl. Little Henry was too young to work, but it was agreed that Sam should become a printer. Printing offered opportunity for education as well as a livelihood. He was apprenticed to a man named Ament, who had recently moved to Hannibal and bought the *Courier*. Sam's school days were over at twelve. For him the serious business of life was begun.

## VIII

### SAM CLEMENS, PRINTER'S APPRENTICE

THE terms of Sam's apprenticeship were not very exciting, but they were not uncommon for that day; board and clothes—"more board than clothes, and not much of either," Mark Twain used to say. "I was supposed to get two suits of clothes a year, like a nigger, but I didn't get them. I got one suit and took the rest out in Ament's old garments, which didn't fit me in any noticeable way. I was only about half as big as he was, and when I had on one of his shirts I felt as if I had on a circus tent. I had to turn the trousers up to my ears, to make them short enough."

There was another apprentice, Wales McCormick, eighteen years old, and a giant. Ament's clothes were too small for Wales, but he had to wear them. The two apprentices fitted out with their employer's cast-off garments must have been a picturesque pair. Sam and Wales at first ate in the kitchen, but they made it so lively for the old slave cook and her mulatto daughter that they were promoted to the family table, where they sat with Mr. and Mrs. Ament and a journeyman printer, Pet McMurray, a happy soul, as one might suspect from his name.

One longs for a photograph of Sam Clemens at this period. Nothing of the sort remains; only a letter

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

which long years after Pet McMurray wrote to Mark Twain:

If your memory extends so far back, you will recall a little sandy-haired boy of nearly a quarter of a century ago, in the printing-office at Hannibal, over the Brittingham drug store, mounted upon a little box at the case, ~~pulling~~ pulling away at a huge cigar or a diminutive pipe, who used to love to sing so well the expression of the poor drunken man who was supposed to have fallen by the wayside; "If ever I get up again, I'll stay up—if I kin." . . . Do you recollect any of the serious conflicts that mirth-loving brain of yours used to get you into with that diminutive creature Wales McCormick—how you used to call upon me to hold your cigar or pipe whilst you went entirely through him?

Sam became a favorite in the office, and its chief stand-by. Within the year he was a good typesetter and he could run a job press with precision and safety. Furthermore, he had charge of the circulation; which is to say he carried the papers. This was really a showy employment, for a long sagging span of telegraph wire had found its way across the Mississippi, and to carry the last word of the Mexican War news to waiting subscribers was a mission of importance. Sam was even a sort of editor. When the paper was about to go to press and there was not enough to fill the columns, he would go out and hunt up Ament and wait for the necessary copy. It is not recorded that he wrote anything for the paper himself. His ambition at the moment was to be a wandering printer like Pet McMurray, or possibly a negro minstrel, or a clown in a circus.

Life's turning points come when least expected, and, at the moment, usually appear of trifling pro-

## THE PRINTER'S APPRENTICE

portions. The printer's boy, Sam Clemens, one afternoon on his way home, saw blown along the street a square bit of paper, a leaf from some book. He overtook the flying scrap and examined it. It was from some old history of Joan of Arc, and told of "the maid" in the tower at Rouen, reviled and maltreated by ~~her~~ captors. Sam had never read any history, he had never heard of Joan of Arc, but now there stirred within him not only a powerful interest, but a feeling of deep indignation. He must know more of the tragic story.

It was an interest and an indignation that while he lived would never perish. The boy began to read. He hunted up whatever he could find about Joan; he became eager for French history in general; he seemed likely to become a student. From the moment when that fluttering leaf was blown into his hands his career as one of the world's mentally elect was assured. Furthermore, his sympathy for Joan prompted him to a hatred of all oppression and human injustice. He became the champion of the weak, the defender of the under dog.

Orion Clemens returned from St. Louis that he might be nearer to the family. He had aspirations to own a paper, and when a chance offered to buy the *Hannibal Journal* he succeeded in borrowing the necessary five hundred dollars and became its proprietor. Then he persuaded Sam, who by this time had been two years with Ament, to come into his employ. Henry Clemens at eleven was taken out of school to learn typesetting.



## IX

### LITERARY BEGINNINGS

ORION was not a good proprietor. He was visionary and vacillating, ready to follow any new idea. He worked like a slave and did not spare the others. The paper seemed to him their one hope of success. In his self-accusing way he afterward wrote:

I was tyrannical and unjust to Sam. He was clean and swift as a good journeyman. I gave him "takes," and if he got through well I grudged him the time and made him work more.

Orion did not realize his injustice at the time. The game was too desperate to be played tenderly. Sam complained of his hard lot. There were no more free afternoons. The boy had visions of striking out for himself.

The paper prospered for a time, and then Orion's strength and enthusiasm waned. The pace was too hard. When payments came due on his mortgage he could not meet them. When the need of money became great he made a trip to Tennessee, to try to raise something on the land.

It was at this point that Samuel Clemens's career as a journalist made its initial step. Orion left him in charge of the paper, and the boy concluded to liven up the circulation. The editor of a rival paper

## LITERARY BEGINNINGS

had been crossed in love and was said to have tried to drown himself. Sam wrote an article telling all about it, furnishing names and details. Then on the back of two big wooden letters used for bill printing he engraved illustrations, one of them showing the victim wading out into the river, testing the depth of it with a stick.

The paper came out and the press had to be kept running steadily to supply the demand for it. The satirized editor sent word that he was coming over to clean out the office, but he disappeared instead. The laugh was too general. Sam also wrote a poem at this time. It was entitled "To Mary in Hannibal." But perhaps he thought this title too long to be set in one column, so he omitted all the letters in "Hannibal" except the first and the last, and supplied their place with a long dash, with disturbing results. Orion returned and tried to make amends. Sam was reduced to the ranks. At a later time Orion saw his mistake.

"I could have distanced all competitors, even then," he wrote, "if I had recognized Sam's ability and let him go ahead, merely keeping him from offending worthy persons."

Sam sent two anecdotes to the *Saturday Evening Post*, then, as now, published in Philadelphia. They were accepted—without payment—and when they appeared he felt that he had entered among the elect. He was sixteen at the time.

He seems to have been satisfied with his distinction, for he sent nothing further to the *Post*. Now and then he did something for the *Journal*—some-

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

thing not likely to invite trouble. No contributions of this time have been identified.

The Clemens family now lived in their own house, and Mrs. Clemens and Pamela were piecing out the income with boarders and music lessons. Orion became despondent; one night a cow got into his printing office, upset a type case, and ate up two composition rollers. The world seemed all against him.

Another disaster quickly followed. A fire broke out and his loss was considerable. With the insurance money he replaced such articles as were absolutely needed and removed his plant into the front room of the Clemens dwelling. Here for another two years, as the result of hard work and pinching economies, the dying paper managed to drag along. Meantime Pamela Clemens had the good fortune to marry. Her husband was William A. Moffett, a well-to-do merchant, formerly of Hannibal, but then of St. Louis, where he provided her with the comforts of a substantial home.

Orion's circumstances did not improve. He noticed that even his mother no longer read his editorials; this was a final blow.

"I sat down in the dark," he writes, reminiscently, "the moon glinting in at the open door. I sat with one leg over the chair and let my mind float."

As a result of this moonlight excursion Orion sold the paper, on an offer that would just cover the amount of the mortgage. A little later he left Hannibal and located in Iowa.

## X

•

### —JOURNEY IN THE WORLD

HIS brother Samuel was no longer with him. Several months earlier, June, 1853, Sam had decided to go adventuring on his own account. He was in his eighteenth year and had grown restless in unrewarded service. He confided his plan to his mother. He had decided to go to St. Louis, he said, where Pamela was. He meant to go farther than St. Louis, but he dared not tell her. Jane Clemens put together his few belongings, then she gravely held up a little Testament.

"I want you to take hold of the other end of this, Sam," she said, "and make me a promise."

We may believe that it was a striking picture; the slim, wiry woman of forty-nine, her figure as straight as her deportment, facing the fair-cheeked, auburn-haired youth, his eyes as piercing and unwavering as her own.

"I want you to repeat after me, Sam, these words," Jane Clemens said. "I do solemnly swear that I will not throw a card or drink a drop of liquor while I am gone."

He repeated the oath after her, and she kissed him.

"Remember that, Sam, and write to us," she said.

"And so," Orion records, "he went wandering in search of that comfort and that advancement and

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

those rewards of industry which he had failed to find where I was—gloomy, taciturn, and selfish. I not only missed his labor; we all missed his bounding activity and merriment."

Sam went to St. Louis by the night boat, visited his sister Pamela, and was presently setting type on the *Evening News*. When he had earned enough to pay his fare to New York City he set out for the metropolis, where there was a Crystal Palace exposition that he wished to see. He had never traveled on the train before, and the several days and nights of the journey were a wonderful experience.

He found New York a vast place, dazzling in size and splendor. The exposition building stood a good way out. It was where Bryant Park is now, on Forty-second Street and Sixth Avenue. Sam Clemens regarded it as one of the wonders of the world. He wrote of it to his sister, and the fragment of this letter which remains is his earliest preserved writing. A portion of it follows:

From the gallery (second floor) you have a glorious sight—the flags of the different countries represented, the lofty dome, glittering jewelry, gaudy tapestry, etc., with the busy crowd passing to and fro—'tis a perfect fairy palace—beautiful beyond description . . .

The Latting Observatory (height about 280 feet) is near the Palace—from it you can obtain a grand view of the city and the country around. The Croton Aqueduct, to supply the city with water, is the greatest wonder yet. Immense sewers are laid across the bed of the Hudson River, and pass through the country to Westchester County, where a whole river is turned from its course and brought to New York. From the reservoir in the City to the Westchester County reservoir the distance is 38 miles and, if necessary, they could easily supply every family in New York with 100 barrels of water per day!

## A JOURNEY IN THE WORLD

I am very sorry to learn that Henry has been sick. He ought to go to the country and take exercise, for he is not half so healthy as Ma thinks he is. If he had my walking to do, he would be another boy entirely. Four times every day I walk a little over a mile; and working hard all day, and walking four miles is exercise. I am used to it now, though, and it is no trouble. Where is Orion going to? Tell Ma my promises are faithfully kept; ~~and~~ if I have my health, I will take her to Ky. in the Spring—I shall save money for this. . . .

(It has just struck 2 A.M. and I always get up at 6 and am at work at 7).

You ask me where I spend my evenings. Where would you suppose, with a free printer's library containing more than 4000 volumes within a quarter of a mile of me, and nobody at home to talk to? Write soon.

Truly your brother,

SAM.

There is nothing in this letter to suggest the literary man of a dozen years or so later. It is a letter that any boy of his years and opportunities might have written—a boy interested in the world's progress and concerned with the welfare of his home. But it gives us, somehow, a feeling that the writer had acquired new responsibilities. He is no longer just a boy; he has somehow stepped across the line into manhood.

The work he had secured was in Cliff Street, in the printing establishment of John A. Gray & Green, who paid him four dollars a week, in depreciated, wildcat currency. He lodged at a mechanics' boarding house in Duane Street, and when he had paid his board and washing he sometimes had as much as fifty cents to lay away.

He did not care much for the board; he wrote that New-Yorkers did not live as well as the people of the

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

South. They ate "light bread," which they allowed to get stale, and seemed to prefer it that way. He had been used to the hot biscuits of the South. He did not find New York especially attractive when he had seen its wonders. But he did not find it easy to go elsewhere. In October he wrote to Pamela:

I have not written to any of the family for some time . . . because I have been fooling myself with the idea that I was going to leave New York every day for the last two weeks. I've taken a liking to the abominable place, and every time I get ready to leave I put it off a day or so, for some unaccountable cause. I think I shall get off Tuesday, though.

Here is the first hint of the man of later years. "I have been fooling myself with the idea," is a phrase with a distinct Mark Twain flavor. In the same letter he tells of seeing Edwin Forrest in the part of the *Gladiator*, portions of which he thought "really splendid." It was soon after this that we find Sam Clemens in Philadelphia "subbing" on the *Inquirer*. He was a fairly swift compositor and his earnings were considerably more than they had been in New York. Furthermore, they were paid in gold; he was able now and then to send something to his mother—small amounts, but welcome, no doubt. He wrote with considerable regularity, descriptive letters, vivid and interesting, but with no special promise in them of literary distinction. In a letter written in December he mentions Orion, who by this time had bought a paper in Muscatine, Iowa, and established the family there. Orion seems to have realized that his brother might be a valuable contributor, for the letter says:

## A JOURNEY IN THE WORLD

I will try to write for the paper occasionally, but I fear my letter will be very uninteresting, for this incessant nightwork dulls one's ideas amazingly.

In some of the letters to Pamela there are indications of homesickness. He resents any thought that he is discouraged or downhearted, a pretty sure sign. In one place he says, "I would like amazingly to see a good old-fashioned negro." And again, "One only has to leave home to learn how to write letters to an absent friend." And he adds, "I don't like our present prospect for cold weather at all."

It was late in the summer of 1854 when he set out on his return to the West. He used to say that he sat up three days and nights in a smoking car on that journey. He saw Pamela for a few hours in St. Louis, then caught the Keokuk packet boat and, flinging himself into a berth, slept the clock three times round, only waking at last at Muscatine. It was very early when he arrived, too early to rouse the family. In the small hotel where he waited for morning he found on the writing table a little well-worn book. It contained pictures of the English sovereigns, with the brief facts of their reigns. The young man entertained himself learning these items by heart. In an hour or two he had those details memorized, and he never forgot them. It became his groundwork for all English history.



## XI

### KEOKUK

ORION wished his brother to remain in Muscatine, but Sam had grave doubts as to financial prospects there, and returned to his old place on the *St. Louis Evening News*.

Orion Clemens presently married and removed to Keokuk, the home of his wife's parents. He opened a job-printing office and seemed to have fair prospects. His brother Sam came up for a visit, and received an offer of five dollars a week and board to remain. He decided to accept. Henry Clemens, now seventeen, and a lad by the name of Dick Hingham were the assistants.

They were a lively lot. A music teacher with a class on the floor below objected to some of their evening diversions. He protested furiously, which was a mistake. The riot grew and added improvements. Then the poor professor tried gentleness, with entire success. He not only made friends of the young men, but added them to his singing class.

Sam Clemens was never much of a musician, but he had a pretty good voice in those days and could drum on the piano and guitar. He was easily the most popular member of the group. They liked his frank nature, his humor, his slow, quaint fashion of

## KEOKUK

speech. The young ladies called him a "fool"—a term of endearment as they applied it, meaning that he kept them in a more or less continuous state of merriment. They enjoyed his fun and sage remarks, but it is unlikely that they predicted for him literary fame. • Yet in later years they remembered that Sam very often carried a book under his arm—a history, a volume of Dickens, or the tales of Poe.

He read more than they supposed. At night, propped up in bed—a habit never abandoned—he read and smoked until a late hour. He had made himself a pipe of the Oriental sort—one with a bowl that sets on the floor, and with a long flexible stem. Such a pipe would hold more, but it had certain disadvantages. When it went out one had to lean far over to light it again. A young man named Edward Brownell occupied a room over the office, and was on his way to it one night when he heard Sam Clemens call. He poked his head in at the door.

"What will you have, Sam?" he asked.

"Come in, Ed. Henry is asleep and I am in trouble. I want somebody to light my pipe."

"Why don't you get up and light it yourself?"

"I would, only I knew you would be along in a few minutes and would do it for me."

Brownell scratched and applied the necessary match.

"What are you reading, Sam?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing much, a so-called funny book. One of these days I'll write a funnier book than that, myself."

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

"No, you won't," grinned Brownell. "You are too lazy ever to write a book."

The Keokuk period of Mark Twain's life extended over something less than two years. It was not distinguished<sup>e</sup> for its achievements, but neither was it unimportant. At a printers' dinner he made what was probably his first speech. It must have pleased his hearers, for they impressed him into a debating society, and there was always a stir of attention when he was about to take the floor. Also, in Keokuk he became interested in a subject which was to provide another great turning point in his life.

Orion's printing office was not a prosperous one. When he found that he could pay Sam no wages he took him into partnership, which was no great improvement so far as Sam could discover. Matters were at sixes and sevens, as the latter complainingly wrote to his mother, and in a letter two months later we come upon the new subject mentioned above. A book on the upper Amazon, by Lieutenant Herndon, had fired Sam Clemens with a desire to go to the headwaters of the great South American river, there to collect coco and make a fortune. It did not occur to him that it might be difficult to get to the Amazon. It was his nature to see results with a dazzling largeness that blinded him to the details of achievement. He wrote of this characteristic long after; he said:

"I still do the thing . . . and reflect afterward. Always violently. When I am reflecting on these occasions, even deaf persons can hear me think."

## KEOKUK

He wrote to Henry of his plans, and to his mother. To Orion, as yet, he said nothing. Two other young men talked of joining him, but, probably for want of means, abandoned the idea.

Sam himself had no supply of funds. Orion had promised him at least fifty dollars that fall, but there was little hope of getting it. The Amazon trip, therefore, did not seem very imminent until fate or Providence or accident—whatever we may choose to call the unaccountable—all at once took the matter in hand. Again, as in the case of the Joan of Arc episode, the wind was the messenger. One of those incredible things, more strange than any fiction, happened.

On a day early in November, bleak, bitter, gusty, with curling snow, Samuel Clemens, passing along Main Street, saw a bit of paper whirl past him and lodge against the side of a building. Something about it attracted him and he captured it. It was a fifty-dollar bill. He had never seen one before, but he recognized it. He thought he must be having a pleasant dream. He was tempted to pocket his good fortune and say nothing. His conscience would not consent; in the end he advertised his find.

"I didn't describe it very particularly," he once declared, "and I waited in daily fear that the owner would turn up and take away my fortune. By and by I couldn't stand it any longer. My conscience had got all that was coming to it. I felt that I must take that money out of danger."

## XII

### THE RETURN OF THE OLD ~~AMBITION~~

YOUNG Clemens decided to make Cincinnati his first stop. His fifty dollars would take him that far, possibly either to New York or New Orleans, in one of which ports he would work at his trade and so provide himself with means to continue the Amazon adventure. He made a brief preliminary trip to St. Louis, to see his mother and sister, and Jane Clemens made him renew his promise as to liquor and cards. The owner of the Keokuk *Saturday Post* would seem to have had faith in Sam's literary gifts, for he agreed to pay him five dollars each for a series of letters of travel—certainly excellent payment, for that time and locality. The first of these letters, dated at Cincinnati, November 14, 1856, fixes within a few days the time of his arrival. The letter itself, written in the exaggerated dialect then considered humorous, has little or no hint in it of Mark Twain. He was presently working in the printing office of Wrightson & Co., rooming with an unsmiling Scotchman named Macfarlane, a man twice Sam's age, who did some heavy mechanical work the nature of which he never confessed and Sam never learned. Macfarlane was a student and a philosopher, considerably in advance of his time. He had already formulated the theory

## THE OLD AMBITION

concerning the descent of man which Darwin and Wallace published later. His human philosophy, which abandoned all creeds and traditions, made a deep impression on his young companion.

Spring came, and with the quickening of the sap the young ~~coco~~ hunter began to bestir himself for the next stage of his journey. The way to New Orleans seemed most inviting. An indolent trip down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers lured him powerfully after the hard Cincinnati winter. He had saved some money, and one day engaged passage on the steamer *Paul Jones*, thus conferring lasting fame on that ancient craft. He looked forward to a week of idle luxury; certainly he had little thought that his river voyaging was to continue through four sunlit years.

In *Life on the Mississippi* Mark Twain tells us that he ran away from home, as a boy, vowing never to return except as a pilot. But this is fiction. He was in his twenty-second year, and the facts are as here set down. It is true that the old pilot ambition had never wholly died, and the fact that some of his boyhood friends were already pilots—each, as it were, a king in his own right—must have caused the old romance of river life to stir strongly within him as the little *Paul Jones* dropped down out of the Ohio into the majestic river, between shores that became ever more luxuriant with spring.

Horace Bixby, pilot of the *Paul Jones*, a man of thirty-two, was looking out over the bow, at the head of Island No. 35, when he heard behind him a slow, pleasant voice:

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

"Good morning, sir."

Mr. Bixby, a small, brisk man, gave a friendly good-morning, without looking around. He was not inclined to encourage visitors in the pilot house. This one came a little closer.

"How would you like a young man to learn the river?" he drawled.

Bixby glanced over his shoulder and saw a rather slender young fellow, with a fair, girlish complexion and a tangle of auburn hair.

"I wouldn't like it. Cub pilots are more trouble than they're worth. A great deal more trouble than profit."

"I am a printer by trade," the drawling voice went on; "it doesn't agree with me. I thought I'd go to South America."

Mr. Bixby kept his eye on the river. "What makes you pull your words that way?" he asked—"pulling" being the river word for drawling.

The young man had taken a seat on the visitors' bench.

"You'll have to ask my mother," he said, more slowly than ever. "She pulls hers, too."

The reply appealed to Mr. Bixby's sense of humor. His laugh encouraged his visitor to another advance.

"Do you know the Bowen boys?" he asked, "pilots in the St. Louis and New Orleans trade?"

"I know them well. William Bowen did his first steering for me. I know Sam, too, and Bart."

"Old schoolmates of mine, in Hannibal. Sam and Will were my chums."

## THE OLD AMBITION

"Come over and stand by me," said Bixby.  
"What is your name?"

"Samuel Clemens," said the caller, and the two stood looking at the sunny water.

"Do you drink?"

"No."

"Do you gamble?"

"No, sir."

"Do you swear?"

"Not for amusement; only under pressure."

"Do you chew?"

"No, sir, never, but I *must* smoke."

"Did you ever do any steering?"

"I've steered everything on the river but a steamboat, I guess."

"Very well, take the wheel and see what you can do with a steamboat. Keep her as she is—toward that lower cottonwood snag."

Bixby had a sore foot and was glad of a little relief. He sat down on the bench and kept a careful eye on the course. By and by he said.

"There is just one way I would take a young man to learn the river—that is, for money."

"What—do you—charge?"

"Five hundred dollars, and I to be at no expense whatever."

In those days pilots were allowed to carry a learner, or cub, board free. Mr. Bixby meant that he was to be at no expense in port or for incidentals. His terms looked rather discouraging. Sam said:

"I haven't got five hundred dollars in money.



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

I've got a lot of Tennessee land, worth two bits an acre; I'll give you two thousand acres of that."

"No," said Bixby, "I don't want any unimproved real estate; I have too much already."

Sam remembered Pamela's husband, from whom he thought he might be able to borrow a hundred dollars without straining his credit.

"Well, then," he said, "I'll give you one hundred dollars, cash, and the rest when I earn it."

Horace Bixby considered. This young man of slow, pleasant speech and unhurried movement appealed to him. The terms proposed were agreed upon. The deferred payments were to begin when the pupil had learned the river and was receiving pilot's wages. Mr. Bixby nursed his sore foot during most of the daylight watches and gave directions to his new apprentice. As they descended into the drowsy South Samuel Clemens had almost forgotten that he was a printer or that he had planned to sail for the Amazon. At New Orleans Bixby changed from the *Paul Jones* to a fine St. Louis boat, taking his cub with him. We shall have something to say of that up-river trip, presently, and need only to add just here that at St. Louis Sam successfully borrowed the money from Mr. Moffett to provide for the first item of his contract. Then he changed again, to a still larger and more sumptuous craft, a splendid unit of the solid mile of steamboats that thronged the river front, their belching stacks reared high against the blue.

## XIII

### THE CUB PILOT

MISSISSIPPI RIVER piloting in that day was a regal occupation. The pilot was a law unto himself; his direction of the boat was absolute. He could land the boat or lay it up when he chose. If he consulted the captain it was merely a matter of courtesy. He could, if he thought proper, take the boat into what seemed certain destruction, and the captain was obliged to stand by, helpless and silent, for the pilot had all the law on his side.

Furthermore, the pilot was a gentleman. His work was clean and physically light. It ended the instant the boat was tied to the landing, and did not begin again until it was ready to back into the stream. His salary for those days was princely—the Vice-President of the United States received no more. As for prestige, the Mississippi pilot, perched high in his glass inclosure, smartly dressed and commanding all below him, was the most conspicuous, the most observed and envied personage in the world. No wonder Sam Clemens, with his love of the river and his boyish fondness for distinction, aspired to that stately office. He knew—he must have known—something of the great task he had undertaken: that of learning twelve hundred miles of a shifting river, with its countless snags and shoals

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

and caving banks; to become as familiar with it by night or by day as the hallway in his own home. He was willing to undertake that giant task, knowing that it would be hard, though we may believe he had never realized its full magnitude. Nobody could grasp that—not till afterward.

On the way up the river Bixby had begun to give him instructions. In the Mississippi book the author tells of this in his delightful fashion. The reader cannot do better than to look up those early chapters, for it would be hopeless to attempt a proper summary of them here. There is an element of fiction in them, of course. But without doubt they present the aspect and the substance of truth. Bixby was a small man, hot and quick firing, though kindly, too, and gentle, when he had blown off. Just one brief example of his teaching methods. He had been casually naming the points and crossings during the afternoon, and some hours later, on the night watch he began an examination to test the memory of his apprentice. Apparently Sam had forgotten everything. Finally Bixby asked:

"Look here! What do you start from, above Twelve-Mile Point, to cross over?"

"I—I—don't know."

"You—you—don't know," mimicking my drawling manner of speech. "What do you know?"

"I—I—nothing for certain."

Bixby exploded and said a number of severe things. Then:

"Look here, what do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?"

## THE CUB PILOT

I tremblingly considered a moment—then the devil of temptation provoked me to say, “Well—to—to—be entertaining, I thought.”

This was a red flag to the bull. He raged and stormed so (he was crossing the river at the time) that I judged it made him blind, because he ran over the steering-oar of a trading-scow. Of course the traders set up a volley of red-hot profanity. Never was a man so grateful as Mr. Bixby was, because he was brimful, and here were subjects who could *talk back*. He threw open a window, thrust his head out, and such an eruption followed as I had never heard before. The fainter and farther away the scow-men's curses drifted, the higher Mr. Bixby lifted his voice and the weightier his adjectives grew. When he closed the window he was empty. You could have drawn a seine through his system and not caught curses enough to disturb your mother with. Presently he said to me, in the gentlest way: “My boy, you must get a little memorandum book, and every time I tell you a thing put it down, right away. There's only one way to be a pilot and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A-B-C.”

Sam Clemens bought the little book, at the next stop, and presently it “fairly bristled” with the names of towns, points, bars, islands, bends, and reaches, but it made his heart ache to think that he had only half these things set down, for as the watches were four hours off and four hours on, there were long gaps between during which he had slept. The little notebook still exists, its neat, tiny entries still telling the story of that first trip. And those long four-hour gaps where he had been asleep, they are still there, and somehow the old heartache is still in them. Mark Twain, easy-going, dreamy, impracticable, as he appeared in later years, must have loved the river and the prestige and independence of the pilot's life, to have persisted against all discouragement in the work he had undertaken.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

The reader at this point should not fail to read Chapter VIII of the Mississippi book. It is one of the most luminous in the volume, so far as the science of piloting is concerned, and it is also a literary masterpiece. \*

In time Samuel Clemens accumulated a store of river knowledge, and this was not all. He learned human nature there. As the streets of Hannibal had taught him life in an earlier day, so the great water highway contributed a fund of human knowledge. Steamboat men were never celebrated for their fastidiousness. The mate and the deck hand were the direct descendants of the old keel-boat men of the earliest river navigation. Captains and pilots were of grand estate, but they were not angels. Sam Clemens broadened his vocabulary on the river, and if its additions were not always polite, and if he did not always sift the quality of his wit, we may also remember that he was an extreme example of a human being in the making. In one place he writes:

In that brief, sharp schooling I got personally and familiarly acquainted with all the different types of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography, or history.

Certainly life was a great school for Mark Twain. We may be thankful that it was just what it was—and no more.

The demands of the Missouri River trade took Horace Bixby away from the Mississippi for a time, and, according to custom, he turned his pupil over to the pilot of the *John J. Roe*. The *Roe* was a very deliberate freight boat, owned and conducted by

## THE CUB PILOT

farmers, but of unbounded hospitality and comfort. She was not licensed to carry passengers, but always had a dozen "family guests" aboard, and was the jolliest boat imaginable. Sam Clemens was in heaven on that slow-going, delightful craft, and then by contrast he entered a period of inferno. Bixby returned, made a trip or two, then left, having transferred him again, this time to a man named Brown. Brown was a pilot on the fine new steamer *Pennsylvania*, one of the handsomest boats on the river. Young Clemens was by this time a good steersman, and Bixby probably thought it fortunate to find for him such a berth.

But Brown proved a disappointment. He was illiterate faultfinding, tyrannical, and vindictive. He took a dislike to Sam, who was none of these things, and the young man despised him almost from the start. He made an effort to please his chief, but to no purpose. Brown nagged him continually. No matter how well Sam was doing at the wheel, Brown would snarl out:

"Here, where you going, now? Pull her *down*, pull her *down*, do you *hear* me? Dod-durned mud-cat!" Sam found it hard to restrain himself from doing violence to Brown. In the Mississippi book he writes:

I could imagine myself killing Brown; there was no law against that, and that was the thing I always used to do the moment I was abed. Instead of going over my river in my mind, as was my duty, I threw business aside for pleasure, and killed Brown. I killed Brown every night for a month; not in old, stale, commonplace ways, but in new and picturesque ones.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

He tried to be respectful to Brown. Custom, even the law, required that. But occasionally temptation led him almost to the verge of impertinence. One day they were steaming up the river when the pilot noticed that the boat seemed to be taking an unusual course.

"Here," he yelled, "what you heading for now? What in nation you steering at, anyway? *Durn numskull!*"

"Why," Sam drawled, placidly, "I didn't see much else I could steer for, so I was heading for that white heifer on the bank."

The young man, though by this time accounted a good steersman, was receiving no wages. He had been on the river a year, but it would be several months yet before he could obtain a pilot's license. Meantime there was need of money and his savings were exhausted. The *Pennsylvania* made a round trip in about thirty-five days, with a day or two of idle time at either end. Sam found he could earn two or three dollars a night watching freight on the New Orleans levee. Long afterward he said:

"It was a desolate experience, watching there in the dark among those piles of freight; not a sound, not a living creature astir. But it was not a profitless one. I used to have inspirations, as I sat there alone, those nights. I used to imagine all sorts of situations and possibilities. Those things got into my books by and by, and furnished me with many a chapter. I can trace the effects of those nights through most of my books, in one way and another."

Even with Brown, piloting had its pleasant

## THE CUB PILOT

features. In a letter which Sam wrote to his sister he tells of a stirring night adventure in the running ice when he and others of the crew went out in the yawl to take soundings. The excitement and danger of an undertaking like this were the sort of thing that the boy who ~~had~~<sup>had</sup> been Tom Sawyer would love. In the same letter he speaks of his brother Henry, for whom he has found a small clerkship on the *Pennsylvania*. It is the first word of that tragic episode which saddened Samuel Clemens's early years and left its mark upon his life. Henry Clemens at this time was twenty years old, a handsome, gentle boy. Sam was lavishly fond and proud of him. He became third clerk on the *Pennsylvania*, and it was a great comfort to have him along. The naggings of Brown seemed easier to bear.

The relief was brief enough. The *Pennsylvania* was on the way down the river, one morning, when Henry appeared on the hurricane deck to bring notice from the captain of a landing to be made somewhat lower down. Brown was rather deaf, but would never confess it. Very likely he did not understand the order. He paid no attention to Henry, and when he was opposite the landing went straight ahead. The captain, whose name was Klinefelter, appeared on the deck and called to him.

"Didn't Henry tell you to land here?"

"No, sir."

Captain Klinefelter turned to Sam, "Didn't you hear him?"

"Yes, sir."



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Brown said: "Shut your mouth. You never heard anything of the kind."

Below the landing, Henry came into the pilot house, unaware of any trouble. Brown in his ugliest manner said:

"Here, why didn't you tell me ~~me~~ had got to land at that plantation?"

Henry said, respectfully, "I did tell you, Mr. Brown."

"It's a lie."

Sam Clemens flamed up: "You lie yourself. He did tell you."

Brown was dazed for a moment; then he shouted, "I'll attend to your case in half a minute." And to Henry, "You get out of here."

The boy had started, when Brown suddenly seized him by the collar and struck him in the face. Instantly Sam was upon Brown with a heavy stool and stretched him on the floor. Then all the accumulated indignation possessed the young man, and, leaping upon Brown and holding him with his knees, he pounded him with his fists until his strength and fury were exhausted. Brown, finding himself free, sprang with pilot instinct to the wheel, for the boat had been drifting. Seeing there was no danger, he seized a spyglass as a weapon.

"Get out of this here pilot house," he raged.

But Sam lingered and calmly corrected Brown's English. He felt that nothing could make matters worse. He would probably be hanged for mutiny, as it was.

"You should leave out the 'here,'" he drawled;

## THE CUB PILOT

"it is understood, and not considered good English form."

"Don't you give me none of your airs; I ain't going to stand nothing more from you."

"You should say, 'Don't give me *any* of your airs,'" Sam commented, "and the last half of your sentence almost defies correction."

A group of passengers and white-aproned servants had assembled on the forward deck and applauded the conqueror. Sam left Brown raging and went below to find Captain Klinefelter. He expected to be put in irons. The captain took him into his private room and closed the door. He looked at the culprit thoughtfully.

"Did you strike him first?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"What with."

"A stool, sir."

"Hard?"

"Middling, sir."

"Did you knock him down?"

"He—he fell, sir."

"Did you follow it up? Did you do anything further?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do?"

"Pounded him, sir."

"Pounded him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you pound him much—that is, severely?"

"One might call it that, sir, maybe."

"I am deuced glad of it! Hark ye, never mention that I said that. You have been guilty of a great crime; and don't ever be guilty of it again on this boat, *but*—lay for him ashore! Give him a good sound thrashing. Do you hear? I'll pay the expenses."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From *Life on the Mississippi*.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Sam heard Captain Klinefelter laughing to himself as the door closed behind him.

Brown forbade him the pilot house, swearing he would leave the boat at New Orleans if Sam Clemens remained on it, and Captain Klinefelter told him to go, offering to let Sam run the ~~day~~ light watches alone. But the young steersman had less confidence, and advised the captain to keep Brown for the up trip. He would follow by another boat, and resume his place when Brown was gone. It was a decision that probably saved his life.

Henry Clemens usually joined his brother during the night watches on the levee, and the two made the rounds chatting together. On the night before the departure of the *Pennsylvania* they spoke of disasters on the river. Sam, who had a vivid and troublesome dream, said, finally:

"In case of accident, whatever you do, don't lose your head. The passengers will do that. Rush for the hurricane deck and the lifeboat and obey the mate's orders. When the boat is launched help the women and children into it. Don't get in yourself. The river is only a mile wide; you can swim ashore easily enough."

Coming up the river on the *A. T. Lacy*, two days behind the *Pennsylvania* and approaching Greenville, Mississippi, Samuel Clemens heard a voice shout from the landing:

"The *Pennsylvania* is blown up, just below Memphis, at Ship Island. One hundred and fifty lives lost."

Farther up the river they received added news,

## THE CUB PILOT

with the names of some of the victims. Henry Clemens was mentioned as being scalded beyond recovery.

All of the reports were true. At six o'clock of a warm mid-June morning, while loading wood sixty miles below ~~Memphis~~ Memphis, four out of eight of the *Pennsylvania's* boilers had suddenly exploded, with fearful results. All the forward end of the boat had been blown out. Samuel Clemens found his brother stretched upon a mattress on the floor of an improvised hospital. Henry was one of those who had been blown into the river by the explosion. He had started to swim for the shore, but presently, feeling no pain, had turned back to assist in the rescue of others. What he did after that could not be clearly learned. Perhaps he had really been uninjured at first and had been scalded in his work of rescue. It will never be known. He was terribly injured, and died on the fourth night following the catastrophe. His brother always held himself responsible for the boy's death, and his remorse did not spare him. He never really looked young again. Gray hairs began to come, his face took on that serious, pathetic look which from that time it always had in repose.

## XIV

### PILOT SAMUEL CLEMENS

THE young pilot returned to the river as steersman for George Ealer, who with Captain Klinefelter had survived the disaster. Pilot Brown was one of the victims; he was never seen after the explosion. Sam steered for Ealer through the summer, and in September of that year (1858) obtained a full license as a Mississippi River pilot. In eighteen months he had packed away in his head all the endless mass of statistics and acquired that confidence and courage which made him one of the elect. He knew every snag and bank and dead tree and reef in all those endless miles of shifting current, every cut-off and crossing. He could read the surface of the water by day, he could smell danger in the dark. At twenty-three he had acquired a profession which surpassed all others for absolute sovereignty. He was accounted a good pilot. To the writer of these chapters Horace Bixby said:

"Sam was not only a pilot, but a good one. Sam was a *fine* pilot, and in a day when piloting required a great deal more brains than it does now. There were no signal lights along the shore in those days, and no searchlights on the vessels; everything was blind, and on a dark, misty night, in a river full of snags and shifting sandbars and changing shores, a

## PILOT SAMUEL CLEMENS

pilot's judgment had to be founded on absolute certainty."

Bixby had returned from the Missouri by the time his pupil's license was issued, and they were again together, this time as partners and equals, first on the *Crescent City*, later on a fine new boat called the *New Falls City*. Still later they appear to have been together on a very large boat, the *City of Memphis*, and again on the *Alonso Child*. Young Sam Clemens had plenty of money now. He could help his mother with a liberal hand, and he did it. He also helped Orion, both with money and with advice. He had become all at once the head of the family. Some of his letters of this period reflect his exuberant success.

For Samuel Clemens these were halcyon days, the most independent and tranquil that he would ever know. He had few cares, and the fullest ambition of his childhood had been realized. The river with its languorous, deliberate life exactly suited him. He loved it all as he would never quite love anything again. He was of great popularity. His humorous stories and quaint speech made a crowd collect wherever he appeared. Now and again some of his droll sayings and stories found their way into the New Orleans papers. Perhaps he occasionally contributed something, but if so he did not acknowledge it. Horace Bixby remembered in later years that "Sam was always scribbling when not at the wheel."

It was Bixby's opinion that the young pilot was writing only to amuse his friends. One of his efforts, however, found its way into print—an unhappy circumstance, as it turned out. It was a burlesque of

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

an old steamboat captain, a sort of oldest inhabitant of the river, who had a passion for airing his ancient knowledge before the younger men. The burlesque of Captain Sellers would hardly be worth remembering to-day were it not for its association with the originator of what is probably the best known of literary names, the one which Samuel Clemens himself in time adopted. Sellers used to send paragraphs to the New Orleans papers, often beginning, "My opinion for the citizens of New Orleans, etc.," prophesying river conditions and reciting incidents and comparisons dating as far back as 1811. These he usually signed, "Mark Twain." The young pilots amused themselves by giving imitations of Captain Sellers, but Samuel Clemens went a step farther. He wrote a ridiculous imitation of the old captain's newspaper contributions, describing a perfectly impossible trip which the writer was supposed to have made in 1763, with a Chinese captain and a Choctaw crew. Bart Bowen, who was with him on the *Edward J. Gay* at the time, thought it a masterpiece, and insisted upon printing it. It appeared in the *True Delta* in May, 1859, and broke Captain Sellers's literary heart. He never contributed another paragraph. Mark Twain always regretted the whole matter, and his own revival of the name was a sort of tribute to the old man he had thoughtlessly wounded.

There were times in his life when Samuel Clemens was rather careless in his dress, but it was not while he was on the river. His associates of that day afterward remembered him as a spruce, even dandi-

## PILOT SAMUEL CLEMENS

fied young pilot, often clad in blue serge and white duck, his beard cut in the atrocious mutton-chop fashion of that period, which had the effect of adding to his apparent age.

The pilots regarded him as a great reader, a student of history, travel, even the sciences—a young man whom it was worth while to know. Sam began the study of French one day in New Orleans, at a school where French, German, and Italian were taught, a language in each of three rooms. The price was twenty-five dollars for each language, or all three for fifty dollars. The student received a set of conversation cards for each room, and was supposed to walk from one apartment to another, changing tongues at each threshold. It all seemed very easy, and with his usual enthusiasm the young pilot decided to take all three languages. But after making a few round trips of the rooms he decided that for the present French would do. He did not continue with the school, but kept his cards and added some textbooks. He was a faithful student; his river notebook contains French exercises—among them a dialogue from Voltaire.

The old river notebook is one of the most fascinating of the Mark Twain relics. It preserves somehow the bloom and poetry of an era of romance forever gone. It constitutes a direct link, as it were, with a beautiful vanished day of which it was indeed a physical part. The notes themselves are mere memoranda, brief, crisp, often cryptographic, many of them conveying little enough to the lay mind. But here is an entry made in January, 1861,



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

under the heading of "2d high water trip—*Alonzo Child*," from which we may build a picture of swirling water, caving banks, blind passages, and black nights.

Good deal of water all over <sup>6</sup>Coles Creek Chute, 12 or 15 ft. bank—could have gone up shore above General Taylors—too much drift. . . .

Night—didn't run either 77 or 76 towheads—8 ft. bank on main shore Ozark Chute.

One gets an impression of a lonely figure in a lofty, glassed-in perch, peering into the dark for dim landmarks, picking his way up the wild, hungry river, which he must know as a man knows the hall of his own home.

The old notebook contains no record of disasters. Horace Bixby declared, "Sam Clemens never had an accident, either as steersman or as pilot, except once when he got aground for a few hours in the *bagasse* [cane smoke], with no damage to anybody."

Bixby and Clemens were together that winter, on the *Alonzo Child*, and a letter to Orion contains an account of a great feasting which the two enjoyed at a French restaurant in New Orleans—"dissipating on a ten-dollar dinner—tell it not to Ma!"

Samuel Clemens, at this time twenty-five years old, had adopted, as he believed, his life profession. No one would have been brave enough to prophesy that within a period of a few months there would come a great national upheaval which would close the Mississippi River to commerce and bring his career as a pilot to a sudden end. Even a celebrated clairvoyant fortune teller, whom he visited

## PILOT SAMUEL CLEMENS

in February, 1861, and who told him some rather remarkable things concerning his future, entirely overlooked the Civil War, then a little more than two months away.

It came, nevertheless. President Lincoln was inaugurated in March. The smoldering discontent of the South suddenly broke into flame. Fort Sumter was fired on, men began to speak out and take sides.

It was a momentous time for pilots. For the most part they knew little of politics and were not quite sure as to the rights of the situation. Some favored the Union, some the Confederacy. Horace Bixby was one of the former, and in time became chief of the Union River Service. A pilot named Montgomery (Sam had once steered for him) cast his lot with the South and later commanded the Confederate Mississippi Fleet. They were all good friends in the beginning.

Samuel Clemens was neither radical nor blood-thirsty. He restrained his desire for war.

"I'll think about it," he said. "I'm not very anxious to get up into a glass perch and be shot at by either side. I'll go home and reflect on the matter."

He had made his last trip as pilot. Curiously enough, his final brief notebook entry begins with his future nom-de-plume—a memorandum of soundings—"Mark Twain."

He went up the river as a passenger, on a steamer named the *Uncle Sam*. An old steering partner, Zeb Leavenworth, was one of the pilots. At Memphis

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

they barely escaped the blockade. They saw war preparations all along. At Cairo, Illinois, soldiers were drilling—troops later to be commanded by Grant.

The *Uncle Sam* came steaming up abreast of St. Louis, and was opposite Jefferson Barracks when there came the boom of a cannon and those aboard saw a great ring of smoke drift in their direction. They did not realize its meaning and kept on. A minute later a shell exploded directly in front of the pilot house, breaking a lot of glass and damaging some of the decorations. Zeb Leavenworth tumbled into a corner.

"Good Lord Almighty, Sam!" he yelled. "What do they mean by that?"

Sam Clemens stepped to the wheel and brought the boat around.

"I guess they want us to wait a minute, Zeb," he said.

They were examined and passed. It was the last boat allowed through the lines.

## XV.

### ~~SAW~~ CLEMENS, SOLDIER

**M**ARK TWAIN'S pilot days were over. Fortunately for his peace of mind, he **did** not realize it. Long afterward he said:

"I loved the profession far better than any I have followed since, and I took a measureless pride in it."

He now proceeded to Hannibal, where he found matters in a rather mixed condition. Missouri was a border state and there was much confusion as to issues. Companies of volunteers were forming, mainly composed of young fellows out for a lark—a sort of camping-out expedition that had something to do with war. By the time of his arrival in Hannibal, Missouri had cast her lot with the South and Sam Clemens patriotically decided, like Lee, to go with his state. He joined a company of young fellows of his own age, mostly pilots and school-mates. They organized secretly, for the Union militia had a habit of coming over from Illinois and arresting suspicious armies on sight. It would humiliate the finest army in the world to spend a night in the calaboose. Hence they met in a secluded place above Bear Creek Hill, pledged themselves to sell their lives on the field of glory, then called on their girls and told them about it, all in regular Tom Sawyer fashion. On the evening of

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

marching, when it was dark and mysterious, they stealthily visited their sweethearts and told them that probably they should never see them again. And some of them were in earnest and never did come back, and somewhere sleep in unmarked graves.

That night the army marched through brush and vines toward New London, for it was considered dangerous to follow the road. At the home of Colonel Ralls, of Ralls County, they received a hot breakfast and some encouraging words. They were a nondescript lot, ununiformed and hung all about with a variety of trappings. Colonel Ralls decided that they needed horses to carry all those things, and he sent word around to the neighbors, who brought in a variety of animals, including a small yellow mule which became the property of Lieutenant Clemens, such being his title. Nearly all the company were officers, there being only three privates, and even those could not be distinguished from their commanders. It was decided to go into camp, so the army moved over to Salt River, near Sam Clemens's birthplace, and took up headquarters in a big log stable. It was an out-of-the-way place, thought to be comparatively safe.

It was not entirely pleasant, however. Heavy rains set in; the river rose and overflowed the bottoms; also there were alarms. Twice on black, drenching nights word came that Union troops, commanded by a certain Col. Ulysses Grant, were in the neighborhood, and the sleepy Hannibal army went hastily slopping through mud and brush in the other direction, dragging wearily back when the

## SAM CLEMENS, SOLDIER

alarm was over. Patriotism is likely to cool under such treatment. Mark Twain used to say afterward that he was once a soldier for two weeks, but that it rained until it washed away all that he thought he was fighting for. There were some further adventures, but the army presently disbanded. Lieutenant Clemens, with a sprained ankle and a high fever, was left at a farmhouse for recovery. When he was able to walk he went up to Keokuk to visit Orion. Orion was a strong Union abolitionist, and his brother Sam, after due reflection during the period of his recovery, had found that he had leanings in that direction himself. In a little while, indeed, to use Mr. Howells's phrase, he was "completely desouthernized."

It was a good time to arrive in Keokuk. Orion Clemens had given support to the administration. Through Edward Bates, a member of Lincoln's Cabinet, he had been appointed Secretary of Nevada Territory, and needed only funds to carry him to Carson City, the seat of his activities. His brother Sam was therefore welcome. He had saved a considerable amount out of his pilot's wages, and Orion promptly appointed him his private secretary, an inducement to provide the needed funds.

Sam was willing enough. The overland trip across the plains called to him. Also, at the other end there was always the possibility of adventure, even fortune. "Over the hills and far away" stirs something in all of us, and to nobody would the words convey a more alluring prospect than to Samuel Clemens.

## XVI

### THE PIONEER —

MARK TWAIN'S picture of the overland stage journey as presented in *Roughing It* carries a charm as fresh to-day as ever. The brothers went up the Missouri River to St. Jo, where they paid one hundred and fifty dollars each for their stage passage, and on the 26th of July, 1861, set out on that long, delightful trip, behind sixteen galloping horses or mules, never stopping except for meals or to change teams, heading steadily into the sunset over the billowy plains and across the snow-clad Rockies, covering the seventeen hundred miles between St. Jo and Carson City in nineteen glorious days. They rode on top of the stage, most of the day, and nights slept inside, with the uneven mailbags for a bed and a bounding dictionary—Orion's property—for company.

The exhilarating overland mornings, on the billowing plains and amid the peaks of the Rockies, were full of inspiration. Every day brought new scenery and almost every night something in the way of adventure. Sometimes the clatter of the pony rider swept by in the dark, carrying letters at five dollars apiece, making the entire trip in eight days. Occasionally they got a glimpse of the pony rider—a mere flash, as he sped by. But one must

## THE PIONEER

read the story of that long-ago trip—read it and be glad that Mark Twain preserved it for us.

The stage drew into Carson City on an August day, fairly sizzling with heat and covered with alkali dust. Two wayworn, unkempt, unshorn individuals climbed down, slouchy and weatherbeaten, and inquired for the hotel. It was Orion Clemens, the new Territorial Secretary, and his brother, former dandified pilot, later a lieutenant of a forlorn hope, now an obscure adventurer of the frontier.

Mark Twain's first sight of the world he was to conquer was not very stimulating. He saw a little, unprepossessing, "wooden town" of two thousand population—the human drift which every whirlwind of discovery gathers and sweeps along. The sidewalks and streets were thronged all day with a motley aggregation—a congress of races. Gold and silver hunting and mine speculations were the industries: gambling, drinking, and murder the recreations.

The Clemens brothers found lodgings with a genial Irishwoman (the Mrs. O'Flannigan of *Roughing It*), and Orion, in his usual meager fashion, established himself in a humble little office which he thought the authorities at Washington would approve. They would have respected him much more if he had housed himself in ornate quarters and run his affairs in a lavish, high-handed fashion. But Orion Clemens was not built on a masterful plan.

Samuel Clemens, finding neither duties nor salary attached to his position, devoted himself to the study of frontier life and to the enjoyment of its easy-



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

going freedom. He acquired friends, of course, and these would gather around the little stove in Orion's office on chilly fall evenings and listen to Sam's yarns of the river, told in that inimitable fashion which would win him an audience all his days. His hearers regarded him as a genial, influential fellow that it was good to know—one not likely ever to set the world afire. He allowed his beard to grow, and adopted the loose, careless dress of the frontier. With his great bushy head of auburn hair, his piercing eyes, and his lounging walk he drew the immediate attention even of strangers. He became the most conspicuous figure on the Carson streets. They thought him indifferent and lazy. They saw him stand by the hour, staring drowsily at the human kaleidoscope of the public square, smoking a short clay pipe, lost in contemplation. They thought it a profitless employment. They could not know that it was a priceless education.

He did not immediately catch the mining fever. He thought his stay would be temporary. The war would end presently and he would go back to the river. He had moments of homesickness for the old life. Some of his friends acquired mining claims and urged him to share them, but his enthusiasm awakened slowly. He was rather more interested in the riches above ground. He heard of the great forests around Lake Tahoe, where timber claims could be had for the asking, and by and by, with a young Ohio lad, John Kinney, made a trip into that mountain wilderness. Everything was as represented: the lake with its measureless depth of

## THE PIONEER

water, so clear that to drift upon it was like floating on air; the quiet luxury of the dim solitude; the vast colonnades of pines, wealth incalculable. They staked out a timber claim and made a semblance of fencing it. Also they constructed a primitive house to comply with the law. They did not occupy the house, but lived by their campfire on the borders of the lake. In *Roughing It* he writes:

It never occurred to us, for one thing; and, besides, it was built to hold the ground, and that was enough. We did not wish to strain it.

One evening their campfire got away from them, fired the forest, and demolished their fence and habitation. The letter which he wrote home describing this event is vivid and contains something of the literary touch of later years. He seems by this time to have developed an interest in mineral prospects, for he speaks of a share which he and Orion have obtained in mining grounds, and the possibilities of future wealth. We hear no more of the timber claim, so it must have been abandoned. Indeed, every other interest was presently lost in that delirium which comes only with the pursuit of precious ores.

The mining fever had become an epidemic. No one was immune from it. Stories of men who had gone to bed paupers and awakened millionaires were on every tongue and were repeated by the press. There was evidence more material than these wild tales. Cartloads of ore, even of gold and silver bricks, drove daily through the streets of Carson

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

City. No wonder Samuel Clemens, with his natural tendency to speculative optimism, suddenly found himself, to use his own words, "as frenzied as the craziest."

He joined an expedition starting for the newly opened Humboldt region, two hundred miles away, beyond a desert of alkali and sand. The expedition included two young lawyers, named Oliver and Clagget (Clemens had known Billy Clagget as a law student in Keokuk); an old blacksmith named Tillou who had some knowledge of mining; two dogs—a small curly-tailed mongrel, Curney by name, and a young hound; these with Sam Clemens himself and a team of rather indifferent horses constituted the personnel of the party. A rickety wagon loaded with provisions and mining tools completed the outfit. They had not gone very far when they found the horses could not drag the loaded wagon, so the miners got out and walked. Presently they found it necessary to push. Then it began to snow, and through sand and snowstorm they continued to push across that two-hundred-mile desert, sustained only by the thought that fortune awaited them at the end of their journey. At night they bundled close under the blankets, with the dogs to keep them warm, and when it was too cold to sleep the future entertainer of kings would spin yarn after yarn to make them forget their discomforts. They were eleven weary days pushing their wagon and team to Unionville, arriving at last in a driving snowstorm.

Mark Twain in *Roughing It* has told the story of

## THE PIONEER

their experience there, with few embellishments. "Oliphant" of the story was Oliver, "Ballou" was Tillou in real life. Judge Oliver in later years denied that a cow ever rolled down the mountain side, through the roof of his cabin, when he was writing poetry, but the rest of the story he did not dispute.

The gold hunters did not find a fortune, Humboldt prospects proved to be only prospects, and after a brief period of privation and hopeless pecking at flinty edges the prospectors resigned. Clemens returned to Carson City, nearly perishing in a blizzard on the way; Clagget and Oliver hung out law shingles in Unionville, Clagget as a notary public, Oliver as probate judge. Blacksmith Tillou also returned to Carson. History does not state what became of the wagon and team, or of the two dogs.

It was the end of January when he returned to Carson. A few weeks later we find him at another bleak wintry camp, Aurora, in the Esmeralda region, on the edge of California. It was here that the Clemens brothers had acquired some mining claims, and he had come down to develop them. In his letters home he did not confess his Humboldt failure, and while he tried to be conservative as to future prospects, there were times when his temperament ran away with him until he fairly soared through page after page of golden promise.

Meantime he was learning the trade of mining from his camping partners, one of whom was Calvin H. Higbie, who would one day be immortalized in the story of *Roughing It*, and in the dedication of that book. Their funds were always low. Sam

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Clemens had used up his pilot savings, and Orion was now financing the work from his slender salary. The prices of food became exorbitant. There were times when flour sold as high as a dollar a pound, and the dollar was not forthcoming. Everything was frozen and covered with snow. The ledges which were to yield their fortunes were buried deep under the ice and drift. Some days they tried to work a little, but it was too disheartening. Around the cabin stove they would gather and paw over their specimens and test them with the blowpipe. When the result was encouraging they forgot that the larder was low and the roof leaked like a sieve. To them the mountains were banked with nuggets and all the rivers ran gold.

There were days when the ex-pilot made them forget their troubles with diverting tales, though sometimes he talked not at all, but sat crouched in the corner, writing—letters, as they thought. Often he *was* writing letters—terse, tense, even profane letters, to Orion in Carson City, detailing conditions, resenting all interference on Orion's part, reiterating his faith and his intention of sticking it out to the end. He closes one letter with:

Send me \$40 or \$50—by mail—immediately. I go to work to-morrow with pick and shovel. Something's got to come, by G—, before I let go here.

And a little later he wrote:

I have been at work all day blasting and digging, and damming one of our new claims—"Dashaway"—which I don't think a great deal of, but which I am willing to try.

## THE PIONEER

This was a period of real labor—back-breaking and blistering—the first he had ever really known. We hear no more of “Dashaway,” so it must have been quickly added to the other list of disappointments.

Not many of the letters went to his people—there was so little to write. And apparently not many came in reply, for in a letter to Orion, in which he says: “Couldn’t go to the hill to-day. It snowed. It always snows here, I expect,” he added the final heartsick line, “Don’t you suppose they have pretty much quit writing at home?”

He was not always writing letters. One or two of those sent home had been reprinted in a Keokuk paper. Copies containing them had gone back to Orion, who had shown them to a representative of the *Territorial Enterprise*, published at Virginia City. The *Enterprise* reprinted at least one of them, and perhaps this stirred the old literary impulse, for some of his writing on those stormy afternoons went to the *Enterprise*—sketches signed “Josh,” crude burlesques, but suited to the frontier. They brought no return in money, but they were printed, and, though the author would have been the last to believe it, he was knocking, however lightly, at the door of the House of Fame.

In *Roughing It* Mark Twain tells us that when provisions reached a prohibitive price he went to work as a common laborer in a quartz mill, at ten dollars per week. He did go to work in the mill, partly for the reason named and partly to learn something of the process, in the prospect of one

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

day having a mill of his own. A week of it, however, satisfied him. He contracted a violent cold and was nearly poisoned by the chemicals.

It is about at this place that the "blind lead" episode of *Roughing It* belongs. The story as told in that book is mainly fiction, though there was a "Wide West" mine and Higbie and Clemens forfeited their claims in it through neglect. The "Wide West," however, did not prove a valuable mine, and the story as told is chiefly an account of what might have happened. It furnishes a natural climax and a dramatic close to the author's mining career.

In reality the ending came in no such showy fashion. His enthusiasm died hard, his surrender was gradual and reluctant. The "Josh" letters to the *Enterprise* had attracted the attention of Joseph T. Goodman, owner and editor of that paper. There was need of another reporter, and in July (1862) a letter came from the business manager, Barstow, to the all but discouraged miner, with an offer of twenty-five dollars a week. He had already been trying to get something to do in the way of newspaper letters, which he had agreed to write for as little as five dollars each, but he was not entirely ready to abandon his mining claim. He replied, asking when they thought he might be needed. He was playing for time to consider. He wanted to go into the wilderness, to think it out. To Orion he wrote:

I shall leave at midnight to-night, alone and on foot, for a walk of 60 or 70 miles through a totally uninhabited country.

## THE PIONEER

He had still made no decision when he returned, eight days later. Indeed, in a letter to his sister Pamela he declared, "This country suits me and it shall suit me whether or no." He was dying hard—desperately hard, and never quite confessing defeat.

Just how ~~and~~ when the end came cannot now be known. But one hot, dusty, August afternoon, a travel-stained pilgrim drifted wearily into the office of the *Virginia City Enterprise* and, loosening a heavy roll of blankets, dropped into a chair. He wore a rusty slouch hat, no coat, a faded blue-flannel shirt, a navy revolver; his trousers hung loosely from his boot tops. His reddish-brown hair, that touched his shoulders, and his tawny beard, that dropped halfway to his waist, were dingy with alkali dust. Aurora lay one hundred and thirty miles from Virginia City. The stranger had walked that distance, carrying his heavy load. Editor Goodman was absent at the moment, but the other proprietor, Denis E. McCarthy, signified that the caller might state his errand. The wanderer regarded him with a far-away look and said, absently and with deliberation:

"My starboard leg seems to be unshipped. I'd like about a hundred yards of line; I think I am falling to pieces." Then he added, "I want to see Mr. Barstow or Mr. Goodman. My name is Clemens and I have come to write for the paper."

It was the master of the world's widest estate, come to claim his kingdom.



## XVII

### A COMSTOCK JOURNALIST

THE *Territorial Enterprise* was then in the hey-day of its prosperity. Joseph T. Goodman and Denis McCarthy had scraped together a few dollars, a year or two earlier, and bought it as a forlorn hope. Then had come the discovery of the Comstock Lode, out of which poured a flood of silver that would presently inundate the markets of the world. On that tide of fortune the *Enterprise*, from a starving sheet in a shanty, was borne swiftly to undreamed heights of power and affluence. Goodman himself was a man of wide human understanding, a fine, forceful writer. Associated with him were men like William Wright (known as Dan de Quille), R. M. Daggett, and others of distinction among the writers of the Pacific slope. Samuel Clemens fitted into this group, adding a fresh vigor of thought and expression that was the very essence of Comstock life.

Dan de Quille, who was city editor, was about to leave for a trip to the States when Clemens arrived, and it was partly for this reason that he had been summoned. Goodman wanted him for the local work. He believed the man who had written the "Josh" sketches could give the items just the right touch. He was not disappointed. The months he had spent in Carson, the hard days in Humboldt

## A COMSTOCK JOURNALIST

and in the Esmeralda camp, had given Sam Clemens just the knowledge of frontier life needed for his work. His pilot memory gave him the faculty of accuracy as to details, his humor and picturesque phrasing made his vehicle of expression ideal. Joseph Goodman—“Joe,” as they all called him—realized immediately that he had drawn a prize, and allowed him a latitude suited to his gifts. De Quille returned from the East and added to the general gayety. The *Enterprise* became, in fact, a sort of free ring, with everyone for himself. Goodman let his staff write and print, with almost no restraint. Often its members wrote of one another—squibs and burlesque which gratified the Comstock far more than mere news. At a later date Arthur McEwen, a reporter of those early times, wrote of the *Enterprise*:

The indifference to news was noble—none the less so because it was so blissfully unconscious. Editors Mark or Dan would dismiss a murder with a couple of inches and sit down and fill up a column with a fancy sketch.

Some of the sketches were indeed fancy. Sam Clemens wrote a number of hoaxes that not only fooled readers, but many papers along the Coast, who did not much relish being taken in by the new “smart” writer on the *Enterprise*. In a way these constituted the beginnings of fame.

Clemens, himself was often a victim of practical jokes; his droll manner and rare invective on these occasions made him an inviting subject. One of the *Enterprise* compositors, Stephen E. Gillis, was his bosom friend. Steve, however, was a merciless

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

joker and never could resist the temptation of "making Sam swear." Prompted by Steve Gillis, the *Enterprise* force would invent annoyances. There was no gas in the office, and each reporter had a lamp which he kept in order, for his own use. Sam Clemens detested the care of ~~a lamp~~ and wrote by the light of a candle.

To "hide Sam's candle" was a favorite way to set him going. He would look for it a little, then he would begin a slow circular walk—a habit acquired in the pilot house—and his denunciation of the thieves was a fierce oratorio. He put up signs on his desk bearing fearful threats, but sometimes both the sign and the candle were gone. On one such night a very mild young minister who had taken a fancy to Clemens happened to step into the office just when he was denouncing the thieves in the most lurid terms. Sam admired the young minister, whose name was Rising, and wished to preserve his respect. What was his horror, then, when he turned in his rotary walk, to come face to face with Mr. Rising, spellbound, as it were, by his language. He could not immediately shut off the flow, and he did not pause in his treadmill walk. In a slow monotone he said:

"I know, Mr. Rising, I know it's wicked to talk like this; I know I shall certainly go to hell for it. But if you had a candle, Mr. Rising, and those thieves should carry it off every night, I know that you would say, just as I say, Mr. Rising, G—d d—n their impenitent souls. May they roast in hell for a million years!"

## A COMSTOCK JOURNALIST

The little clergyman caught his breath. "Maybe I should, Mr. Clemens," he replied, "but I should try to say, 'Forgive them, Father; they know not what they do.'"

"Oh, well," conceded Sam, "if you put it on the ground that ~~they~~ are just fools, that alters the case, as I'm one of that class, myself. Come in and we'll try to forgive them and forget about it."

There was a side to Samuel Clemens that in those days few of his associates saw. This was the poetic, the philosophic side. Joseph Goodman realized it, and often the two men dining together discussed life's subtler phases or recalled poems that gave them especial pleasure. "The Burial of Moses," with its noble phrasing and imagery, appealed strongly to Clemens and he recited it with great power. With eyes half closed and chin lifted, a lighted cigar between his fingers, he would lose himself in the music of the stately lines:

"By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
On this side Jordan's wave,  
In a vale in the land of Moab  
There lies a lonely grave.  
And no man knows that sepulcher,  
And no man saw it e'er,  
For the angels of God upturned the sod  
And laid the dead man there."

He must have been deeply impressed by the simple grandeur of that poem. We find it copied in his notebook, and it may easily have been the starting point of the pure and direct English of his later years.

## XVIII

MARK TWAIN

THE Nevada legislature was about to meet, and one evening at dinner Clemens proposed to Goodman that he allow him to report its proceedings for the *Enterprise*. He was without experience in that field, and for a moment Goodman hesitated. Then reflecting that, whether Sam got the details right or not, the result would be interesting reading, he gave consent.

A frontier legislature is bound to be picturesque. The Nevada assembly was just the kind of place to develop Samuel Clemens's native literary gift. He made blunders in his reports, of course. But he was so frank in his ignorance, and in his confession of it, that the very mistakes of his early letters became their chief charm. A young man named Gillespie, clerk of the House, coached him on parliamentary matters, with beneficial results. Clemens, in return, christened Gillespie, "Young Jefferson's Manual," a title which he bore, proudly indeed, for the rest of his life.

More experienced reporters presumed at first to ridicule the *Enterprise* letters. This was a mistake; Sam Clemens was a master in that field. In one of his letters he so drenched a presuming rival, named Rice, with satire and derision that from

## MARK TWAIN

that time forward Rice was commonly known as the "Unreliable."

Billy Clagget, who had journeyed with Sam Clemens on the mining expedition to the Humboldt, had returned to Carson as a member of the House. Clemens and Clagget were good friends, and Jack Simmons, Speaker of the House, was their special crony. These three were the conspicuous figures of the session. A group photograph still exists of them. It shows Samuel Clemens in the fashionable dress of that period. He no longer wore the loose array of his earlier Carson days.

No doubt it was gratifying to the former prospector and miner to come back to the capital a person of consequence. Orion Clemens, in the absence of the Chief Executive, was now acting Governor; his wife was the social leader of the capital city, with her brilliant brother-in-law as the chief ornament of her affairs. His merriment and songs and good nature made him a favorite. He could afford to smile at the hard Esmeralda days.

He was not entirely satisfied, however. His letters to the *Enterprise*, copied all along the Coast, were unsigned. They were easily identified with one another, but not with a personality. To build a reputation it was necessary to have a name.

Clemens reflected upon the matter, trying to hit upon something brief, crisp, and unforgettable. Just then (it was early in 1863) news came that the old pilot, Isaiah Sellers, whom he had once wounded with his satire, was dead. At once the pen name of Captain Sellers recurred to him. It was just what

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

he wanted. It had all the qualities, and Sellers would never need it again. He would give it a new meaning in this far-away land. He went up to Virginia City.

"Joe," he said to Goodman, "I want to sign my articles. I want to be identified to a wider audience."

"All right, Sam. What name do you want to use—Josh?"

"No. I want to sign them 'Mark Twain.' It is an old river term, a leadsman's call, signifying two fathoms—twelve feet. It has a richness about it; it was always a pleasant sound for a pilot to hear on a dark night; it meant safe water."

He did not then mention that Captain Sellers had used and dropped the name. He was ashamed of his part in that episode, and the offense was still too recent for confession. Goodman considered a moment.

"Very well, Sam," he said, "that sounds like a good name."

It was indeed a good name. If he had searched all the nomenclature of the world he could not have selected a better one. To-day it seems to us exactly suited to the man, his work, his career. We feel, somehow, that he could not have adopted any other had he tried.

"Mark Twain" was first signed to an *Enterprise* letter February 2, 1863, and from that time was attached to all of Samuel Clemens's work. Those picturesque Carson reports had acquired a personality and a new interest. The writer of them

## MARK TWAIN

began to be called "Mark" not only in print, but by his associates. The name "Mark Twain" almost immediately became known up and down the Coast.

In the letters which Samuel Clemens wrote home at this period there is no reference to these things. They are cheerful, youthful letters, full of humor and optimism, and they bear evidence that he had renewed his old river habit of inclosing money. There occurs in them, however, no mention of his nom de plume, though undoubtedly some of the letters have been lost. From one of them we get a sharp reminder of Comstock life. He says:

I have just heard five pistol-shots down the street—as such things are in my line, I will go and see about it.

Later he adds this postscript:

5 A.M. the pistol-shots did their work well. One man, a Jackson County Missourian, shot two of my friends (police officers) through the heart—both died within three minutes. The murderer's name is John Campbell.

More than one national character came out of the Comstock. Among them John Mackay, a miner, at first, with pick and shovel; then a superintendent, though with no immediate prospects of wealth. Mark Twain one day jokingly proposed to trade jobs with him.

"No," said Mackay. "My business is not worth as much as yours. I have never swindled anybody, and I don't intend to begin now."



## XIX

### ARTEMUS WARD

THIS was in 1863, and in that year a new and important literary influence came into Mark Twain's life. Charles F. Browne, who signed himself Artemus Ward, one day arrived in Virginia City. He was on a lecture tour and had expected to stay only a day or two, but the whirl of the Comstock and the fascinations of the *Enterprise* group ensnared him. He made the office his headquarters, and was constantly with Joe Goodman and Mark Twain during their periods of leisure. With the *Enterprise* group he dined almost every evening at Chaumond's, a French restaurant, the best on the Coast.

In Mark Twain, Artemus Ward recognized a kindred spirit, his natural successor. Ward was then at the height of his fame, and took occasion to encourage his brother humorist, prophesying great things for him. It was the right word at the right time. The younger man undoubtedly measured himself by Ward's estimate, and set a new mark for his ambition. Joseph Goodman remembered afterward that, observing the two together, they all rated Sam as Ward's equal in mental stature and originality. At a Christmas Eve dinner given by Ward to the *Enterprise* staff they had a chance to compare

## ARTEMUS WARD

the two. When the cocktails came on Artemus rose, lifted his glass, and said:

"I give you upper Canada."

Rising, the company drank the toast in serious silence. Then Goodman said:

"Of course, Artemus, it's all right, but why did you give us upper Canada?"

"Because I don't want it myself," said Ward, gravely.

Then began a rising tide of humor that could hardly be matched in the world to-day. Mark Twain's genius was awakening; Artemus Ward was in his prime. They were giants of a race that became extinct when Mark Twain died.

Goodman remained rather quiet during the evening. Ward had appointed him to order the dinner, and he attended to the details without mingling much in the conversation. When Ward asked him why he did not join in the banter, he said:

"I am preparing a joke, Artemus, but I am keeping it for the present."

It was near daybreak when the bill was at last presented. It was two hundred and thirty-seven dollars.

"What!" exclaimed Artemus.

"That's my joke," said Goodman.

"But I was exclaiming because it is not twice as much," returned Ward, laying the money on the table.

In great good nature they went out into the early morning air. Artemus threw his face up to the sky and said:

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

**"I feel glorious; I feel like walking on roofs!"**

Virginia is built on a steep hillside; the eaves of some of the houses almost touch the ground behind them.

"There is your chance," Goodman said, pointing to a row of these houses, all about ~~the~~ a height.

Artemus grabbed Mark Twain and they stepped out upon a long string of roofs and walked their full length, with locked arms. It was an unusual performance. A policeman came near shooting at them, for burglars.

That night was the beginning of a week of glory. The farewell dinner became a series. At the close of one session Artemus Ward went to a concert hall, blacked his face, and delivered a speech. That was about the end of the year and closed his stay in Virginia. A day or two later he wrote to Mark Twain, from Austin, Nevada, referring remorsefully to his final performance, and adding:

"I shall always remember Virginia as a bright spot in my existence, as all others must, or rather cannot, be, as it were."

Then, reflectively:

"Some of the finest intellects in the world have been blunted by liquor."

Rare Artemus Ward and rare Mark Twain! If there lies somewhere a place of meeting and remembrance, they have not failed to recall there those closing days of '63.

## XX.

### MARK TWAIN MAKES A SPEECH

ARTEMUS WARD had encouraged Mark Twain to try his work on the East. Clemens was willing enough, and sent some sketches to the New York *Sunday Mercury*, which Ward had recommended. One or more of his contributions found acceptance, but without much return either in money or reputation. Ward had also advised that he make a trip eastward, but Clemens wisely resisted this temptation. He was back in Carson in January, for the opening of the last territorial legislature.

Nevada was to become a state in the fall and the jokers of the legislature decided to celebrate their final session. They organized a burlesque assembly which they called the "Third House." They decided to hold its first and only session in a church, and to charge admission, the church to have the returns. Of this Third House Mark Twain was selected as "Governor" and his "message" was to be in the form of a speech, which meant that he was to burlesque from the platform all public officials and personages from the Governor down. His letter of acceptance is more characteristic of his later expression than anything that has been preserved of that time. In it he said:

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Although I am not a very dusty Christian myself, I take an absorbing interest in religious affairs, and would willingly inflict my annual message upon the Church itself if it might derive benefit thereby. You can charge what you please; I promise the public no amusement, but I do promise a reasonable amount of instruction. I am responsible to the Third House only, and I hope to be permitted to make it exceedingly warm for that body, without caring whether the sympathies of the public and the Church be enlisted in their favor, and against myself, or not.

With the exception of a short talk at the printers' dinner in Keokuk this was Mark Twain's first appearance as a public speaker, the beginning of a lifelong series of platform triumphs. The building was packed—the aisles full. The audience was ready for fun, and he gave it to them. He was unsparing in his ridicule of the Governor, the officials in general, legislative members, and of individual citizens, including himself. Nobody escaped; from beginning to end the audience was in a storm of laughter and applause. There were those in Carson City who always maintained that the Third House address was Mark Twain's greatest effort, but if we had it in cold print to-day we should perhaps modify this opinion. No word of it has been preserved. We can only be sure that it was a perfect fit for the occasion. As a token of recognition Clemens was presented with a gold watch, inscribed "To Governor Mark Twain." Everywhere, now, he was pointed out as a distinguished figure, and his quaint remarks were repeated on the streets. Very few of these are remembered to-day. At a party, one night, being urged to make a conundrum, he asked:

"Well, why am I like the Pacific Ocean?"

## MARK TWAIN MAKES A SPEECH

Several guesses were made, but none satisfied him. Finally some one said:

"Tell us, Mark, why *are* you like the Pacific Ocean?"

"I—don't know," he drawled. "I was just—asking—for information."

His day of association with the *Territorial Enterprise* was drawing to a close. A rather ill-natured paragraph written by him in the *Enterprise* brought a heated rejoinder from the editor of the rival paper, the *Union*. The usual violent exchange of recriminations incident to frontier journalism followed, and the inevitable challenge, sent by Mark Twain and duly accepted by the *Union* editor. The duel did not come off—it had been a semi-burlesque affair from the beginning, incited by that inveterate joker, Steve Gillis, who likewise found means to conclude the matter peaceably, at the proper moment. But the challenge had been real enough, and the new dueling laws did not distinguish in such cases, whatever the results. Clemens and Gillis were warned that it would be well for them to try the atmosphere of San Francisco, unless they wished to become the first to test the new law. This suited them exactly. San Francisco had long attracted them. They left by the morning stage. Joe Goodman, on horseback, rode with them as far as Henness Pass. He had meant to turn back there, but they were all in such good spirits that he kept on all the way to San Francisco.

## XXI

### AT THE GOLDEN GATE

IT was near the end of May, 1864, when Clemens and Gillis arrived in San Francisco, and within a week or two both had accepted positions—Gillis as a compositor, and Clemens as a reporter—on the *Morning Call*. The story in *Roughing It*, that Mark Twain plunged into a period of idleness upon his arrival there, is pure fiction. He had often been to San Francisco, pleasure seeking, but he went now for employment and wasted little time in finding it.

Clemens and Gillis roomed together, and the devilish Steve was generally concocting ways to rouse his roommate to violence. Yet these two were always fond of each other—there was never anything resembling estrangement, and to their last days neither Clemens nor Gillis could speak of each other without tenderness.

The position on the *Call* was never congenial to Mark Twain. He had worked in his own way so long that to be simply a unit of an organization, restricted by orders and a policy, was discouraging. More than once when he turned in some report which criticized city conditions it failed to be printed, for political reasons. The San Francisco police department was corrupt, but nothing of this must appear in the *Call*.

## AT THE GOLDEN GATE

Mark Twain, however, found a way to publish something reflecting on the open lack of discipline. One afternoon he noticed an officer asleep on his beat. It would be wasted effort to make an item of the incident. Going to a vegetable stall on the corner, he borrowed a large cabbage leaf, came back and stood over the sleeper, gently fanning him. A crowd collected to enjoy it. When he thought it large enough he went away. Next day the joke was all over the city.

Clemens confessed later that he became indifferent and lazy on the *Call*, and loathed the soulless drudgery of the work. He lost interest, and when Mark Twain lost interest in an undertaking its days were numbered, so far as he was concerned. They allowed him an assistant—to encourage him, perhaps—but it presently became evident that the assistant was sufficient for the job.

In *Roughing It* the author tells us that he was discharged at last for general incompetency. But this is only another example of his lifelong habit of making a story on himself sound as uncomplimentary as possible. He parted with the *Call* on friendly terms, glad to go, and at once began the more congenial work of sending a daily San Francisco letter to the *Enterprise*, a commission for which he received thirty dollars a week. He was also at this period doing a series of sketches for a new literary paper called the *Californian*, which considerably increased his earnings. Very likely he was hard up at time.—literary men are often that—but he was never in the condition of poverty pictured in *Roughing It*.



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain was always willing to sacrifice history, and himself, for the sake of a good story.

There was a very pleasant side to the San Francisco life. Even in that long-ago time San Francisco had its literary group, and among its members were those whose names and work would travel far. Joaquin Miller was one of the coterie, and his diary of that day records his having seen assembled at one time in the offices of the *Golden Era* Adah Isaacs Menken, Prentice Mulford, Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard, Fitzhugh Ludlow, Mark Twain, Orpheus C. Kerr, Artemus Ward, and several others. Certainly a remarkable group to have been dropped down there behind the Sierras, which the transcontinental railway would not cross for several years.

The *Golden Era*, edited by Joseph E. Lawrence, was a journal of considerable literary pretension, and these were its contributors. The *Era* had luxuriously appointed rooms and they made it their gathering place. They were a happy-hearted, aspiring lot, and received as much as five dollars sometimes for an article, which, of course, seemed a good deal more precious than a much larger sum earned in another way.

Mark Twain and Bret Harte were distinctive features of this group. They were already recognized by their associates as belonging to a class by themselves, though as yet neither had done any of the work for which he would be remembered later. Harte had been a printer on the *Era*, and set up his first articles in type, as he composed them. When

## AT THE GOLDEN GATE

the *Californian* was started by Charles Henry Webb, he was made the editor and fitted out with offices suited to his luxurious taste. He paid Mark Twain twelve dollars apiece for his articles, and gave him valuable suggestions as to their preparation. Harte's fame lay all ~~abroad~~, but those were his best days.

Among the sketches done by Mark Twain for the *Californian* were some of those to-day included in the volume, *Sketches New and Old*. "The Killing of Julius Cæsar Localized" was one of these, also "Answers to Correspondents," both excellent of their kind. They appear to have attracted little or no attention east of the Rocky Mountains.

## XXII

### MARK TWAIN GOES MINING AGAIN AND FINDS A NUGGET

IN his letters to the *Enterprise* Mark Twain found the opportunity that had been denied to him on the *Call*. San Francisco was politically corrupt, and Goodman was only too glad to give him a free hand. He attacked the police department with such ferocity that as soon as copies of the *Enterprise* came up from Virginia the city hail was filled with trouble and loud with fierce threats. Stimulated by the commotion, the writer let himself go more vigorously than ever. He sent letters to the *Enterprise* at which even the printers stood aghast. Goodman, however, ordered that every word be printed, adding:

"If Mark can stand it, I can."

The libel suit which Martin G. Burke, chief of police, brought against the *Enterprise* advertised that paper amazingly. Copies were snatched in San Francisco as soon as the Virginia stage arrived.

Unfortunately, as it seemed at the time, Steve Gillis, always a fearless defender of the weak, one night rushed to the assistance of two strangers who had been set upon by three roughs in a barroom. Steve was a fierce and trained fighter and selected the barkeeper, a big bruiser, who was ready for the

## MARK TWAIN FINDS A NUGGET

hospital when the fight ended. But it turned out that he was a favorite of the police, and a warrant was issued for Gillis on a charge of assault with intent to kill. Clemens, of course, went on his bond, and with other friends advised Steve to go down to Virginia City—until the storm blew over. This furnished a choice opportunity for Chief of Police Burke. When the case was called and Gillis did not appear, Burke promptly instituted action against his bondsman, with an execution looking to the possession of his personal effects. If James N. Gillis, brother of Steve, had not happened along just then and spirited Mark Twain away to his mining camp in the Tuolumne Hills, the beautiful gold watch presented to the Governor of the Third House might have been sacrificed in the cause of friendship.

As it was he found himself presently in that remote and peaceful Arcady which Bret Harte would one day picture in his tales of Roaring Camp and Sandy Bar. Jim Gillis was, in fact, the Truthful James of Bret Harte's poem, and his cabin on Jackass Hill had been the retreat of Harte and many another literary wayfarer, who had found there refreshment and peace. It was said that the sick were made well and the well made better in Jim Gillis's cabin on the hilltop, where the air was nectar and the stillness like enchantment.

Gillis himself had literary instincts, and plenty of books. He remained a pocket miner because he loved its fascinations and the quiet of his retreat. He was willing to teach the science to his visitors

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

and make them his partners. On rainy days he entertained them with amazing stories, of his own invention. Standing with his back to the big open fire, he would reel off yarns full of startling adventure and riotous humor, usually the imaginary exploits of his faithful companion, ~~Dick~~ Stoker, who had cabined with him for many years. He always pretended that these extravagant tales of Stoker were strictly true, and Stoker—"forty-six and gray as a rat"—earnest, thoughtful, and tranquilly serene, would smoke and look into the fire and listen to those astonishing things of himself, smiling a little, but saying never a word. In after years Mark Twain put some of those things into his books, among them the story of Dick Baker's Cat in *Roughing It* and the Jaybird and Acorn incident of *A Tramp Abroad*.

It was early in December, 1864, that Mark Twain arrived at the Gillis cabin—a humble retreat, built under a great live-oak tree and surrounded by a stretch of blue grass. It was the rainy season, but on pleasant days they went pocket mining, following some little fanlike drift of gold specks to its source, somewhere up the hillside. Mark Twain added the knowledge of this pursuit to his other sciences and for a few weeks enjoyed its fascinations. He did not make his fortune at it—he only laid its corner stone. In January he went with Gillis and Stoker over into Calaveras County and began work near Angel's Camp, a place well known to the readers of Bret Harte. One moonlight night when a drifting cloud brought a mist of rain he saw a wonderful

## MARK TWAIN FINDS A NUGGET

lunar rainbow, a rare sight. He thought it an omen of good fortune.

The hotel at Angel's Camp was nothing to boast of. In his old notebook occurs this entry:

January 27, 1865—~~same~~ old diet—same old weather—went out to the pocket claim—had to rush back.

It was generally raining, which was bad for the romance of pocket mining. The gold seekers spent a good deal of their time around the rusty stove in the dilapidated tavern, telling stories and enjoying the company of another guest, a former Illinois pilot, Ben Coon, a solemn, fat-witted person who dozed most of the time, or woke up to tell dreary and endless yarns to anyone who would listen. He did not often have an audience; not many came, and few cared to stay. Jim Gillis and Mark Twain, however, regarded Coon as a treasure. It was soothing and comfortable to let him wander on in his dull way, recounting as serious and important history the dull-est trivialities of memory.

One somber afternoon, in his slow, monotonous fashion, he told them about a frog—a frog that belonged to a man named Coleman, who trained it to jump. He told how the trained frog failed to win a wager because the owner of a rival frog had surreptitiously loaded the trained jumper with shot. It was an old story in the camps, but neither Clemens nor Gillis had ever happened to hear it before. They thought the tale itself amusing and Coon's solemn manner of telling it still more so. Later, playing billiards on the frowsy table, one would remark:

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

"I don't see no p'int about that frog that's any better 'n any other frog," and the other would answer:

"I 'ain't got no frog, but if I had a frog I'd bet you."

Out on the claim, between pails of ~~water~~ water, Clemens, as he watched Jim Gillis or Dick Stoker "washing," would be apt to say, "I don't see no p'int about that pan o' dirt that's any better 'n any other pan o' dirt," and so they kept it up. In his notebook, still preserved, Mark Twain made a brief memorandum of the frog story, without comment.

The mining was rather hopeless work; the continuous showers were discouraging. Mark Twain hated that kind of thing. Even when, one afternoon, certain tiny specks of gold began to appear in the washings, and Jim Gillis became excited at the prospect, Clemens began to protest strenuously as the chilly rain increased. Somewhere up the long slope there was a pocket, no doubt. But it had already waited some millions of years and need not be uncovered on this particular afternoon. Gillis, as usual, was washing, while Clemens carried the water. Gillis, seeing the "color" improving with every pan, was warm and eager, regardless of wet and cold. The miner's passion dominated him. Clemens, shivering and disgusted, swore that each pail of water was his last; his teeth were chattering and he was wet through. Finally he said, in his deliberate way:

"Jim, I won't carry any more water. This work is too disagreeable."

## MARK TWAIN FINDS A NUGGET

Gillis had just taken out a panful of dirt.

"Bring one more pail, Sam," he pleaded.

"Oh, hell! Jim, I won't do it. I am freezing!"

"Just one more pail, Sam," Jim pleaded.

"No, sir, not a drop, not if I knew there was a million dollars in that pan."

Gillis tore out a page of his notebook and hastily posted a thirty-day claim notice by the pan of dirt; then they set out for Angel's Camp, never to return. It kept on raining, and a letter arrived from Steve Gillis, saying he had settled all his troubles in San Francisco. Clemens decided to go back, and the miners left Angel's Camp for the cabin on Jackass Hill.

Meantime the rain had washed away the top of the pan of dirt left standing on the hillside, exposing a handful of nuggets, pure gold. Two strangers, Austrians, came along, gathered it up, and, seeing the claim notice posted by Jim Gillis, sat down to wait until it expired. They did not mind the rain, not under the circumstances, and the moment the thirty days were up they followed the lead a few pans farther and took out—some say ten, some twenty, thousand dollars. In either case it was a good pocket that Mark Twain missed by one pail of water. Still, it is just as well, perhaps, when one remembers that more precious nugget of Angel's Camp carried away in Mark Twain's notebook, the story of the Jumping Frog. Jim Gillis always declared:

"If Sam had got that pocket, he would have remained a miner, to the end of his days, like me."



## XXIII

### THE JUMPING FROG, AND HAWAII

MARK TWAIN did not immediately write the frog story. It would seem that he had no great opinion of its literary value. To him it was just an amusing fancy of which he would sometime make a sketch, neither better nor worse than those already written. Arriving in San Francisco, he found a letter from Artemus Ward asking him to do something for Ward's new book of travels, soon to appear. He thought it too late, as the letter had been waiting for him a good while. He wrote to Ward, however, mentioning the frog story, and received a reply, asking him to write it without delay. He did write it and sent it along, but the book was already in type, and the publisher, Carlton, did not think it worth while to add to new material. He handed the manuscript over to Henry Clapp, editor of the *Saturday Press*, a dying publication.

"Here, Clapp," he said, "is something you can use in your paper."

"Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog" appeared in the *Saturday Press* of November 18, 1865, and was copied and quoted far and near.

The author did not know for some time what had happened. The telegraph then carried very little news of that sort. When at last he heard of the

## THE JUMPING FROG

story's success he was not overpleased by it. He had thought the tale rather poor, and Carlton had not cared to use it. In a letter to his mother he wrote:

To think that, after writing many an article a man might be excused for thinking tolerably good, those New York people should single out a villainous backwoods sketch to compliment me on!—"Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog"—a squib which would never have been written but to please Artemus Ward.

A New York correspondent of the San Francisco *Alta* wrote, "Mark Twain's story in the *Saturday Press* of November 18th, called 'Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog,' has set all New York in a roar."

Whether the tale of the Jumping Frog, if it were new to-day, would "set all New York in a roar" is by no means certain. Its humor is fundamental and the quaint simplicity of its telling is full of charm. We were a smaller, simpler people in that day, with a vast appreciation of the comic and not so many opportunities for showing it. Mark Twain's own opinion of it improved when he heard that James Russell Lowell pronounced it the finest piece of humorous writing yet produced in America.

He appears, however, not to have followed it up. He resumed his *Enterprise* letters and did an occasional sketch, but he made no sustained literary effort. He received an invitation to join a select party of guests on the fine new steamer *Ajax*, bound for Honolulu; but declined it, much to his later regret. This, however, gave him a new idea: he proposed to the publishers of the *Sacramento Union* that they send him to the islands, to do a series of

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

letters reporting general conditions there. To his delight they gave him the commission. He sailed March 7, 1866, arriving at Honolulu eleven days later, remaining in the islands four months—a wonderful golden experience which he always hoped some day to repeat.

In *Roughing It* Mark Twain gives us a picture of the Sandwich Islands and a fairly correct history of his adventures there. He fitted in with the peaceful life of that halcyon land, and was everywhere welcomed. Young and eager for adventure, he traveled widely on horseback and afoot—saw everything, did everything, and wrote it all for his paper. He was an insatiable sightseer, and a persevering one. His open-air life on the river and in the mining camp had nerved and hardened him for adventures.

In Mark Twain's scheme of life the right things seemed to come to him at the right time. About the end of June he returned from a tour of all the islands, fairly worn out, and prostrated with saddle boils. Just at this time the steamer *Ajax* arrived again, bringing His Excellency Anson Burlingame, lately appointed minister to China. Burlingame, on the way to his post, had with him his son Edward, a lively boy of eighteen, also General van Valkenburg, minister to Japan. Young Burlingame had read about Jim Smiley and the Jumping Frog, and was a Mark Twain enthusiast. Learning that the author was in Honolulu, laid up at his hotel, the party sent word that they would call on him next morning. Sick as he was, Clemens felt that he could not accept this honor. He crawled out of bed.

## THE JUMPING FROG

dressed and shaved himself, and drove to the home of the American minister, where the party was staying. They had a hilariously good time. On breaking up, General van Valkenburg said to him:

"California is proud of Mark Twain, and some day the American people will be, too, no doubt."

An important event in Mark Twain's career was even then imminent. On that very day, June 21, 1866, there came word of the arrival on one of the islands of an open boat containing fifteen starving sailors who had battled a stormy sea for forty-three days. They were from the *Hornet*, that early in May had taken fire on the line and burned to the water's edge. Presently eleven of the rescued men were brought to Honolulu and placed in the hospital. Mark Twain recognized the great news importance of this event. There was no cable, but a vessel for San Francisco would sail next morning. It was the opportunity of a lifetime; but to get the interviews and prepare the copy seemed beyond his strength.

At this critical moment the entire Burlingame party descended upon him, and a few moments later he was on the way to the hospital, on a cot, escorted by the heads of the joint legations of China and Japan. Arriving there, Anson Burlingame, with his gentle manner and courtly presence, drew from those enfeebled castaways all the story of the burning vessel, their long privation and struggles that had stretched across forty-three distempered days and four thousand miles of tossing sea. Mark Twain only had to listen and make the notes. He

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

put in the night writing against time. Next morning, when the vessel was already drifting from the dock, a strong, accurate hand flung his bulky manuscript aboard and his great beat was sure. The three-column story on the front page of the *Sacramento Union*, July 19, 1866, gave the public its first story of the great disaster.

Samuel Clemens never ceased to love and honor Anson Burlingame. He had another reason in addition to the one named. Burlingame one day said to him:

"You have great ability; I believe you have genius. What you need now is the refinement of association. Seek companionship of superior intellect and character. Refine yourself and your work. Never affiliate with inferiors; always climb."

To Mark Twain, advice like that coming from a man of Burlingame's endowments was a gospel which he would never forget. Burlingame encouraged him to travel—to visit him in Peking. He promised him letters of introduction and facilities in acquiring information about China. It is easy to understand that Mark Twain never felt his debt to Anson Burlingame entirely paid.

Clemens now returned to San Francisco, but the place no longer had any charm for him. Something had happened to him; he hardly knew what. In his notebook he wrote:

August 13, home again. No—not home again—in prison again, and all the wild sense of freedom gone. The city seems so cramped and so dreary with toil and care and business anxiety. God help me, I wish I were at sea again!

## THE JUMPING FROG

When they asked him at the office of the *Sacramento Union* what rate he wanted for the *Hornet* report, he said:

"Oh, I am a modest man; I don't want the whole *Union* office. Call it a hundred dollars a column."

The proprietors laughed, but the bill was made out at that figure. Many years afterward Mark Twain wrote:

The cashier didn't faint, but he came rather near it. He sent for the proprietors, and they only laughed in their jolly fashion, and said it was a robbery, but no matter, pay it. It's all right. The best men that ever owned a newspaper.

Mark Twain's Sandwich Island letters, though inferior to the descriptive writing which a year later would give him worldwide fame, exactly suited the public for which they were intended, and added greatly to his prestige on the Pacific coast. They were not brilliant literature, by the standards of to-day, and he used only a trifling part of them in his Sandwich Island chapters of *Roughing It*, five years later. They do, however, reveal a sort of transition from his riotous manner of the Comstock to the mellowness of his later style.

## XXIV

MARK TWAIN, LECTURER

IT was not easy to take up the struggle again, but it was necessary. Clemens considered a variety of possibilities. One of these was to prepare a *Hornet* article for *Harper's Magazine*. He carried this plan into effect, and its prompt acceptance pleased him mightily. He thought he had taken a step in the direction of fame. His dream was shattered, however, when the article appeared, for the printer and proof reader had somehow converted his signature into "Mark Swain," a sad blow. He had intended to follow it up with a series on the islands; he now dismissed this project. Another plan was to deliver a Hawaiian lecture, but he trembled at the very thought. His Third House speech of two years before had been a success; that, however, had been given for a benefit, and on a subject which concerned the personality of his hearers. To offer himself as an entertainer for his own profit was quite a different matter. He confided his situation to a friend, Col. John McComb, of the *Alta California*, and was startled by his reply.

"Do it by all means," urged McComb. "It will be a grand success—I know it! Take the largest house in town and charge a dollar a ticket."

Under that vigorous stimulus Clemens hurried to

## MARK TWAIN, LECTURER

the manager of the Academy of Music and engaged it for October 2d (1866). He knew the manager and obtained the house at half rates. He now sat down and prepared an advertisement, characteristically absurd, ending with the announcement:

Doors open at 7 o'clock. The trouble to begin at 8 o'clock.

Mark Twain said afterward that "trouble" was the right word, at least in the beginning. He was known in San Francisco, and pretty sure to have a good house. He did not realize this, and as the evening approached his dread of failure increased. He has told us the story himself in *Roughing It*, and we need recall only a few of the details here. Entering by the stage door, the place seemed to him ominously silent; he had the feeling that it must be empty. Then from his concealment he stole a look and saw that it was packed. This was even worse. Sidling out from the wings, wabbly-kneed and dry of tongue, he was greeted by a murmur, a roar, a very crash of applause that frightened away his remaining courage. Then came reaction—these were his friends and he began to talk to them. Fear melted away, and as the applause came in great waves that rose ever higher he knew something of the exultation of Monte Cristo when he declared, "The world is mine!"

It was a genuine triumph; his friends declared that no such lecture had ever been delivered. They praised his eloquence and humor to the skies. The morning papers called him "the most piquant and humorous writer and lecturer on the Coast, since the



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

days of the lamented John Phoenix." Fragments of the lecture still remain, and show a literary value much higher than any portion of his Hawaiian letters. It is notable that he advocated American ownership of the island, dwelling at considerable length on his reasons for this idea.

Mark Twain no longer hesitated as to immediate plans. He engaged Denis McCarthy, late of the *Enterprise*, as his manager, and they laid out a tour of the near-by towns in California, extending it to Carson City, Virginia City, and Gold Hill. It proved a happy excursion. Success traveled with them, whether the lecturer looked across the foot-lights of some pretentious "Opera House" or between the tallow candles of some camp "Academy."

Those who remember Mark Twain's lectures of that day say that his delivery was more quaint, his drawl even more exaggerated, than in later life. They describe his movements as "natural rather than graceful," and recall that his manuscript, which he carried under his arm, looked like a ruffled hen.

Following custom, the lecturer at first thought it necessary to be introduced, and at each place McCarthy had to skirmish around and find the proper person. Some amusing incidents happened in this connection. Once Denis went down into the audience and captured an old miner, who ducked and dodged, but could not escape. When he managed to reach the stage he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is the celebrated Mark Twain, from the celebrated city of San Fran-

## MARK TWAIN, LECTURER

cisco, with his celebrated lecture about the celebrated Sandwich Islands."

Mark Twain never had a better introduction. The audience was in a shouting humor from the start. At one place a showman wanted to combine with him.

"Look here," he said, "I'll let my wife do the tight-rope act outside, and draw a crowd, while you go inside and lecture."

Arriving at Virginia City, he met his old friend Joe Goodman; also Steve Gillis, who by this time was back on the *Enterprise*. Mark Twain had a fine audience in Virginia City, and another at Gold Hill, a few evenings later. Gold Hill was only a little way from Virginia City and Steve Gillis planned a great joke, to be played when the lecturer and his agent should come walking back by the lonely street that lay between the towns.

The joke this time was nothing less than highway robbery, and was duly carried into effect. Denis himself was made party to it, and with Mark Twain was duly held up by masked robbers, halfway between Gold Hill and Virginia City, and relieved of money, watches, and other personal effects. The story is too long to tell here in detail,<sup>1</sup> but Mark Twain was pretty wrathful when he discovered that Gillis and McCarthy were responsible for the mock robbery. Goodman finally pacified him, but he said:

"Well, Joe, I'll let it pass—this time; I'll forgive

---

<sup>1</sup> It will be found in full in *Mark Twain—A Biography*, by the same author.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

them again; I've had to do it *so many* times; but if *I should see* Denis McCarthy and Steve Gillis *mounting the scaffold* to-morrow, and I could save them by turning over my hand, *I wouldn't do it.*"

The financial return from the lecture tour was considerable. San Francisco alone had paid him several hundred dollars, and the smaller places accordingly.

"What kind of a trip did you boys have?" a friend asked, upon the return of Denis and Clemens to San Francisco.

Clemens, just recovering from a cold, contracted the night of the robbery, smiled grimly:

"Oh, pretty good, only Denis here mistook it for a spree."

Having money, now, Mark Twain decided to visit his people as the first step in a journey which he meant to continue around the world. A commission from the *Alta California*, to send them letters, would help to defray his expenses and he was full of the prospect. He had been absent five and a half years—eventful, adventurous years that had made him over completely.

## XXV.

### THE WANDERER RETURNS

HE returned by water—sailing from San Francisco by the way of Nicaragua.

In New York Clemens found Charles Henry Webb, who had put together a number of the Mark Twain sketches, including the "Jumping Frog," for book publication. Clemens himself took the manuscript to Carlton, who, it may be remembered, had turned the frog story over to the *Saturday Press*. But Carlton did not want any more books, just then. Even the fame of the frog of Calaveras did not convince him. Twenty-one years later, in Switzerland, he said to Mark Twain:

"My chief claim to immortality is the distinction of having declined your first book."

Webb immediately set about publishing the book himself, and Clemens was soon with his mother and sister in St. Louis. They thought the five years had told on him. Jane Clemens joked him, scolded him, and inquired searchingly into his habits. In turn he petted, comforted, and teased her. He was the same Sam, she said, and always would be. He made a trip to Hannibal, lectured there, and received a welcome that would have satisfied even Tom Sawyer. It was the same in Keokuk, after which he returned to St. Louis to plan his trip around the world.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

But one day there he saw an announcement of the *Quaker City* Holy Land excursion and was carried away with the new idea in ocean travel. He made up his mind to join that splendid picnic to the shores of the Mediterranean.

His projected trip around the world seemed tame beside it. The company was to be a distinguished one. Anson Burlingame had told him to associate with persons of refinement and intellect. He at once wrote to the *Alta*, proposing that they send him as their correspondent. The fare was twelve hundred dollars and the *Alta* hesitated, but Col. John McComb, of that paper, insisted that the investment would be sound. The proposition was accepted, and Clemens, hurrying to New York, was met by the manager of the *Alta* Bureau in that city, with a telegram saying:

"Ship Mark Twain in Holy Land excursion and pay his passage."

Clemens had read that all applicants must be vouched for as being proper persons to go in such distinguished company, and he had grave fears as to his acceptance. The *Alta* had applied for his passage, but that was all he knew. He went to the shipping office to see about it, and while waiting for attention heard a newspaper man inquire:

"What notables are going?"

A clerk with evident pride rattled off the names:

"Lieutenant - General Sherman, Henry Ward Beecher, and Mark Twain." Which relieved his mind on that point. He was not only accepted, but

## THE WANDERER RETURNS

starred as an attraction. It was his first taste of fame on the Atlantic coast.

The *Quaker City* would not sail for two months yet, during which time Mark Twain was fairly busy. He wrote a number of letters to the *Alta*; his book, *The Jumping Frog and Other Sketches* appeared, and he delivered a Sandwich Island lecture at Cooper Union. He was at this time distinctly in the hands of his friends. Charles Henry Webb published his book, and Frank Fuller, who, as acting Governor of Utah, had known Mark Twain on the Comstock, arranged for the lecture.

The book appeared on the 1st of May, 1867. The author had no great faith in it, though he seems to have been rather pleased with its appearance. To Bret Harte he wrote:

The book is out and it is handsome. It is full of damnable errors of grammar and deadly inconsistencies of spelling in the Frog Sketch, because I was away and did not read proofs; but be a friend and say nothing about these things. When my hurry is over, I will send you a copy to pisen the children with.

The little cloth-and-gold volume, so valued by collectors to-day, contained the frog story and twenty-six other sketches, some of which are still preserved in Mark Twain's collected works. Most of them are not his best literature, but they are fresh and readable and suited to the taste of that period. The book sold very well, and while it did not bring either fame or fortune to its author, it was by no means a failure.

The lecture was also, in its way, a success—certainly a dramatic one. Clemens had little faith

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

in the project, knowing that his public in New York must be a very limited one. Fuller, however, was overflowing with enthusiasm and full of plans for disposing of the tickets. One of his schemes was a lot of little handbills hung in bunches in the street cars. The dangling clusters fascinated Mark Twain, and he haunted the cars to see if anybody else noticed them. Finally, after a long time, a passenger pulled off one of the tiny bills and glanced at it. A man with him asked:

"Who's Mark Twain?"

His companion answered: "God knows. I don't."

The lecturer could not ride any farther. He hunted up his patron.

"Fuller," he groaned, "there isn't a sign—a ripple of interest."

Fuller assured him that everything was working all right—"working underneath," Fuller said. But the lecturer was without hope. He wrote home:

Everything looks shady, at least, if not dark. . . . After we have hired the Cooper Institute and gone to an expense in one way or another of five hundred dollars, it comes out that I have got to play against Speaker Colfax at Irving Hall, Ristori, and also the double troupe of Japanese jugglers.

He forgot to mention that the "Black Crook" was at Niblo's and that the city was filled with other attractions. New York was not inexhaustible in those days; these things could gather in the public to the last man. When the day of the lecture was near and only a few tickets had been sold, Clemens was desperate.

"Fuller," he said, "there'll be nobody in Cooper

## THE WANDERER RETURNS

Union that night but you and me. I am on the verge of suicide. I would commit suicide if I had the pluck and the outfit. You must paper the house, Fuller. You must send out a flood of complimentaries."

"Very well," said Fuller. "What we want this time is reputation, anyway—money is secondary. I'll put you before the choicest and most intelligent audience that was ever gathered in New York City."

Fuller immediately sent out complimentary tickets to the school-teachers of New York and Brooklyn, to come free and hear Mark Twain's great lecture on Kanakadom. This was within forty-eight hours of the time he was to appear. The lecturer had lost faith—he doubted that anybody would come to hear him, even on a free ticket. When the night arrived he drove with Fuller to Cooper Union half an hour before the lecture was to begin. Forty years later he said:

"I couldn't keep away. I wanted to see that vast mammoth cave and die. But when we got near the building I saw all the streets were blocked with people and that traffic had stopped. I couldn't believe that all these people were trying to get to the Cooper Institute—but they were; and when I got to the stage, at last, the house was jammed full—packed; there wasn't room enough left for a child.

"I was happy, and I was excited beyond expression. I poured the Sandwich Islands out on those people, and they laughed and shouted to my entire content. For an hour and fifteen minutes I was in Paradise."

A delegation of Californians was in the audience



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

and welcomed the lecturer with a yell. Senator Nye of Nevada was to have been there to introduce him, but failed to appear. Mark Twain introduced himself with some choice ridicule of the absent one. That pleased everybody and made the Californians fairly scream with delight. After that came the lecture. The first sentence captured the audience, which from that moment to the end was either in a roar of laughter or held breathless by his descriptive passages. It was said that people were positively sick from laughing at that lecture.

So it was a success, even if not a financial one. Mark Twain always felt grateful to the school-teachers for that night, and many years later, when they asked him to read to them at Steinway Hall, he gave his services without charge.

The cash returns from the lecture did not equal the expenses. But Fuller insisted on making good the shortage. That was Fuller's regal way. His own return lay in the joy of the game and the winning of a larger stake for a friend. The papers spoke well of the lecture, and those who heard it spread its fame far and wide.

"Mark," said Fuller, "it's all right; the fortune didn't come, but it will. The fame has arrived. With this lecture, and your book just out, you are going to be the most-talked-of man in the country. Your letters for the *Alta* and the *Tribune* will get the widest reception of any letters of travel ever written."

In spite of his various successes and prospects, Samuel Clemens would seem to have been rather low in his mind at this period. The *Quaker City*

## THE WANDERER RETURNS

was to sail June 8th. On the eve of departure he wrote his mother:

My mind is stored full of unworthy conduct toward Orion and toward you all, and an accusing conscience gives me peace only in excitement and restless moving from place to place. If I could only say, I had done ~~one~~ thing for any of you that entitled me to your good ~~opinions~~ (I say nothing of your love, for I am sure of *that*, no matter how unworthy of it I may make myself—from Orion down, you have always given me that, all the days of my life, when God Almighty knows I have seldom deserved it), I believe I could go home and stay there—and I *know* I would care little for the world's praise or blame.

He spoke of the *Alta* letters as "the stupidest ever written from New York," declaring that correspondence had been a perfect drag. "If it continues abroad, I don't know what the *Tribune* and *Alta* folk will think." And somewhat farther along, "You observe that under a cheerful exterior I have got a spirit that is angry with me and gives me freely its contempt."

Mark Twain always had these periods of depression, and doubtless the reflection that in his thirty-second year he was still without a settled profession or anchorage contributed to his mental unrest. In spite of Fuller's prophecy, we may believe he did not dream that the day of a great new beginning was at hand.

## XXVI

### THE "QUAKER CITY" EXCURSION

IT was a rainy afternoon when the *Quaker City* left the dock on that first great ocean picnic. Indeed, the weather was too rough to venture outside with a lot of excursionists most of whom had never been to sea. So the vessel dropped down the harbor and anchored overnight, sailing next morning to lands beyond the sunrise. In *The Innocents Abroad* Mark Twain has told us the story of it all, and there is something dreamlike and beautiful about the tale of that long ago ocean gypsying that has never been matched in any other book of travel. Thousands of later wanderers have followed in the footsteps of that happy party, hoping to find the same lightness of adventure, the same bloom and romance; and a few, maybe, have found it. But if they did it was because, like Mark Twain and his companions, Jack, Dan, and the Doctor, they carried it with them. Most of the distinguished personages announced for the party did not go, but there were plenty of congenial spirits, and the little group that collected around Mark Twain and traveled with him through France, Italy, and Greece, and across the baking hills of Judea, created realms of their own, and it is of these delectable lands that we read in *The Innocents Abroad*. "Dan" was Dan Slote, Mark

## THE "QUAKER CITY" EXCURSION

Twain's room-mate; the "Doctor" was Dr. A. Reeves Jackson, of Chicago; "Jack" was Jack Van Nostrand, of New Jersey; "Charlie" was Charles A. Langdon, of Elmira, New York, a boy of eighteen, whose sister would one day become Mark Twain's wife.

There were other pleasant people on the ship. There was the "Poet Lariat," who in real life was Bloodgood H. Cutter, a gentle eccentric from Long Island, and there was especially one middle-aged, intellectual, motherly soul—Mrs. A. W. Fairbanks, of Cleveland, who looked after the general welfare of the few young members of the party. She was herself literary—a correspondent for her husband's paper, the *Cleveland Herald*—and she took an immediate interest in Samuel Clemens and his work. She encouraged him to read his letters aloud to her, offered suggestions for their refinement, gave him, in fact, precisely what he needed at this period—the uplifting association and example recommended by Anson Burlingame. Mrs. Fairbanks made up a little group to hear the letters and comment on them. Nothing could be better for their quality than that. There is the greatest difference between the style of those first *Quaker City* letters and anything he had previously written; we may believe that in a large measure it was due to his wise friend and counselor.

They were not a big party on the *Quaker City*. They numbered only sixty-seven, for their little vessel had only an eighteen-hundred-ton register, though a good enough ship, and sizable for her time.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

A party such as that becomes presently like a big family, their affairs known to one another, their interests mutual. It is quite certain that no such other party ever went to sea for so long a voyage as that first little band of ocean wanderers.

*The Innocents Abroad* is very good history. The notes were made on the spot; the letters from which it was compiled were written when the incidents were fresh in the writer's mind. Mark Twain's idea of descriptive travel in those days was to tell the story as it happened. We may believe that the adventures with Jack, Dan, and the Doctor are elaborated here and there, but most of them happened substantially as recorded.

The old notebooks of the trip have survived, and it is curious to look through them to-day, trying to realize that these penciled memoranda were to grow into the world's most delightful book of travel. They were set down in the very midst of that care-free little company that frolicked through Italy and toiled wearily from Beirut to the shores of the Dead Sea, continuing still southward until they stood at last before the Sphinx, impressed and awed by its "five thousand slow-revolving years."

There is an incident of the *Quaker City* trip that finds no mention in *The Innocents Abroad*—the beginning of the author's life romance. Reference had already been made to young Charles Langdon, who was one of Mark Twain's admirers on the ship. The boy often invited Samuel Clemens to his stateroom, and on one of these occasions exhibited his treasures, including a dainty miniature of his

## THE "QUAKER CITY" EXCURSION

sister Olivia, whose sweet and spiritual face made a deep impression on the older man. He looked at it with long admiration, spoke of it reverently, and each time he came, after that, asked to be allowed to see it. In his mind he dreamed he would one day meet the owner of that lovely face; he obtained from young Langdon a promise to invite him to the Elmira home.

The *Quaker City* returned to America November 19, 1867, after an absence of more than five months, and Mark Twain found himself, if not famous, at least in very wide repute. The fifty-three letters sent to the *Alta* and the half-dozen to the *New York Tribune* had carried his celebrity into every corner of the states and territories. Vivid, fearless, full of fresh color, humor, poetry, they came as a revelation to a public weary of the driveling, piety-mouthing letters of that period. They preached a new gospel in travel literature; the gospel of truth—of according praise to whatever seemed genuine, and ridicule to the things considered sham. It was the gospel that Mark Twain would continue to preach during the rest of his career. It became his chief literary message to the world—a world waiting for that message.

## XXVII

### A TIME OF GREAT BEGINNINGS

ARRIVING in New York, Clemens proceeded directly to Washington. He had agreed to accept a secretarial position with Senator Stewart of Nevada, believing that this would give him an assured income, with considerable leisure for his literary work. He had no need of such a position. Scarcely had he landed in America when he received invitations to lecture, at good prices, and to contribute articles to the newspapers and magazines. His connection with Stewart soon came to an end.

About a week following his arrival in Washington the traveler received a letter which marked the beginning of one of the most notable publishing connections in American literary history. The letter was from Elisha Bliss, secretary of the American Publishing Company, of Hartford. Bliss proposed that Mark Twain collect his travel letters in a book, which the company would sell by subscription. He called attention to the fact that they had sold a number of books in that way, including one by A. D. Richardson, entitled *The Field, the Dungeon, and the Escape*, of which a hundred thousand copies had been distributed.

The proposition exactly fitted in with Mark Twain's plans. He replied at once, expressing him-

## A TIME OF GREAT BEGINNINGS

self as agreeable to the idea, and inquiring as to terms. In the end he went to Hartford, and concluded an arrangement with Bliss by which he was to have five per cent royalty, a larger percentage than they were in the habit of paying on a subscription book. They had proposed a lump sum of ten thousand dollars, a great temptation, but by the advice of Richardson, and of Henry Ward Beecher, whose acquaintance Clemens made about this time, he closed on the royalty basis—"the best business judgment I ever displayed," he declared in later years. This was near the end of January, 1868.

Meantime, something of even greater importance had happened. Late in December Samuel Clemens had come over from Washington to New York, to visit his old shipmate, Dan Slote, who gathered at his house Jack Van Nostrand, Charlie Langdon, and others of the "pilgrims." They had a riotous reunion, and an evening or two later young Langdon invited his distinguished *Quaker City* shipmate to meet his father and sister, who had arrived from Elmira and were stopping at the St. Nicholas Hotel. We may believe that Samuel Clemens went very willingly. The lovely face of the miniature, which he had first seen that day in the Bay of Smyrna, had become a part of his daydreams. For the first time now he looked upon the reality. Long afterward he said:

"It is forty years ago. From that day to this she has never been out of my mind."

Charles Dickens gave a reading that night at Steinway Hall. The Langdons went, and invited



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

their guest. Clemens recalled afterward that Dickens wore a black-velvet coat with a fiery-red flower in his buttonhole, and that he gave the storm scene from *Copperfield*—the death of James Steerforth. But he remembered still more clearly the face and dress of the slender, girlish figure at his own side.

Olivia Langdon at this time was twenty-two years old, rare and lovely as the miniature he had seen. The young girl was at first dazed and fascinated, rather than attracted, by this astonishing creature, so unlike anyone she had ever known. To her brother, eager for her approval of his celebrity, she later conceded admiration. As for her father, he did not qualify his opinion. With a hearty sense of humor and a keen perception of sincerity in men, Jervis Langdon accepted Samuel Clemens from the start and remained his stanch admirer and friend.

Clemens saw Miss Langdon again within the week. On New Year's Day he set forth to pay calls, after the fashion of the time—more lavish in its observance than now. Miss Langdon was receiving with a niece of Henry Ward Beecher at the home of a friend. Clemens and young Langdon decided to make this their first call. They arrived at eleven o'clock in the morning and did not leave until midnight. Acquaintance ripens during such a visit.

Mark Twain returned to Washington, to his newspaper correspondence, and to begin the compilation of his book of travel. But then he received word from Joe Goodman that the *Alta* had copyrighted the *Quaker City* letters and proposed to bring them out in book form. Clemens confirmed this by

## A TIME OF GREAT BEGINNINGS

telegraph, and immediately prepared to sail for San Francisco, to take up the matter with them in person. He did not delay his going. He sailed on the *Henry Chauncey*, arriving in San Francisco in April.

Matters in San Francisco turned out as he had hoped. Colonel McComb remained his friend; McCrellish and Woodward, the proprietors, agreed that they had already received good value for the money paid. The author offered to make proper acknowledgments to the *Alta* in his preface, and the matter was settled with friendliness all around. On the 5th of May Clemens wrote to Bliss that he was progressing steadily with his manuscript, and expected to start East with it about the middle of June. He also wrote:

I lectured here on the trip [the *Quaker City* excursion] the other night; Over \$1600 in gold in the house; every seat taken and paid for before night.

His old friend Bret Harte had also leaped into fame. He had become editor of the *Overland Monthly* and his "Luck of Roaring Camp" and "Outcasts of Poker Flat," published in that magazine, were making a great stir in the East.

Mark Twain now concluded to cover his lecture circuit of two years before. He needed the money, and friends urged him to make the venture. The tour was a grand success. He closed it with a second lecture in San Francisco, an event announced with his customary drollery. On his bill he made it appear that the citizens of San Francisco had protested against his lecturing again and were insisting

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

upon his return to New York. This he followed with the statement:

I will torment the people if I want to. . . . It only costs them \$1 apiece, and if they can't stand it what do they stay here for?

Below this he printed other protests—one as coming from the clergy; also, the following:

You had better go.

Yours,

CHIEF OF POLICE.

Mark Twain's farewell address, given at the Mercantile Library, July 2, 1868, remains to-day one of the foremost literary and social events in San Francisco's history. Four days later he sailed on the steamer *Montana* to Acapulco, caught the *Henry Chauncey* at Aspinwall, reached New York on the 28th, and that day or the next delivered his manuscript into Bliss's hands.

He now heard some news: Bliss's directors, mostly of orthodox persuasion, had registered objections to the proposed book, which they believed was not likely to deal kindly with certain religious traditions. Bliss had promptly proposed to resign and publish the book himself—an alarming suggestion to the stockholders. Under his management the company had paid dividends—a boon altogether too rare in its previous history. The objectors had retired, to be heard of no more.

## XXVIII

### VISIT TO ELMIRA

**O**BTAINING a renewal of the invitation to visit the Langdon home, Samuel Clemens now set out for Elmira, and during a happy week enjoyed the hospitality of a charming household and especially the association of Olivia Langdon—Livy, as they called her. As yet, he had spoken no word of his love to the object of it, intending first to take her relatives into his confidence. When the day for his departure arrived he unbosomed himself to Charlie Langdon, much to the latter's alarm. The young man had the greatest admiration for the gifted author, but he did not welcome the idea of this eccentric soldier of letters becoming the life companion of his sister, whom he regarded as little less than a saint. Mark Twain had planned to go by an evening train, but the young man suggested something more immediate.

"Look here, Clemens," he said, when he recovered a little, "there is a train in half an hour; I'll help you to catch it. Don't wait till to-night; go now."

The other shook his head.

"No, Charlie," he said, in his gentle drawl, "I want to enjoy your hospitality a little longer. I promise to be circumspect and I'll go to-night."

Fate always took care of Mark Twain. That

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

night after dinner a light two-seated wagon was at the gate, ready for the departing guest. Clemens and young Langdon occupied the rear seat, which for some reason had not been locked in its place. When the horse started, with a quick forward movement, it flew backward, and both passengers, describing an arc, came down with some force on the cobbled street. They were not hurt, only dazed a little, but in the instant of recovery Mark Twain had an inspiration. When the Langdon family surrounded them he rose very feebly and had to be supported to the house and into an armchair. Remedies were hastily applied; Olivia Langdon showed special anxiety and attention. Of course he was not allowed to go, now. He must remain until his recovery was assured. He was still there two weeks later, after which he made a trip to Cleveland to confide to Mrs. Fairbanks that he expected to win Livy Langdon for his wife.

Returning to Hartford to look after the progress of his book, he met for the first time the Rev. Joseph Hopkins Twichell, a man about his own age, athletic and handsome, pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church. Twichell was a man of great probity and benevolence, with a deep human understanding and an exuberant sense of humor. Mention has already been made of the fact that, however wide apart in preaching or practice, ministers always got on well with Mark Twain. He and Twichell became friends from the first moment of their meeting, and remained so through life.

Hartford had a distinguished literary circle in

## A VISIT TO ELMIRA

those days, among its members, Charles Dudley Warner and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Twichell introduced him freely and Clemens would willingly have remained in that congenial atmosphere.

Business reasons made this impossible. James Redpath, of the Boston Lyceum Bureau, offered him engagements for his new lecture, "The Vandal Abroad," and he was presently earning a hundred dollars or more a night and making most of the nights count. This was real affluence. He could help his mother lavishly, now, and he did it.

Some of his engagements were in central New York, not far from Elmira. He had a standing invitation to the Langdon home, and quite often made it convenient to be there, especially for the week-end. His courtship was not an unruffled one. When at last he reached the point of proposing for the daughter of the house the encouragement he received lacked enthusiasm. Jervis Langdon admired him exceedingly; but annexing that vivid, volatile personality to the family was quite another matter. Clemens went to Cleveland to lecture and confided his troubles to Mrs. Fairbanks, who gave him comfort. It happened that in Cleveland he had a splendid success, and his friend saw that the news of it traveled quickly to Elmira. The Cleveland papers referred to him as a "Lion" and the "coming man of the age." Two days later, in Pittsburgh, he "played" against Fanny Kemble, the favorite actress of that time, with the result that Miss Kemble had an audience of two hundred against nearly ten times that number who gathered to hear Mark

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Twain. On the second morning following, when the Langdon family were gathered at breakfast, a bushy, auburn head was poked fearfully in at the door and a low, humble voice said:

"The calf has returned. May the prodigal have some breakfast?"

No one could long resist a person like that. In truth, the Langdon household had somehow grown to feel that he belonged to them. Theodore Crane, who had married the elder Langdon daughter, was a stanch admirer of Livy's suitor. As for the mother and sister, whatever was her wish was theirs.

There was only a provisional engagement at first. It was agreed between Samuel Clemens and Jervis Langdon that letters should be sent by Mr. Langdon to those who had known his would-be son-in-law, with inquiries concerning his earlier life. Mark Twain confidently enough gave him the names of some San Francisco ministers with whom he had been on excellent terms. He also suggested that Mr. Langdon write to Joe Goodman, if he wanted to, but added that, as he had lied for Goodman a hundred times, Goodman in return would lie for him, if necessary, so his testimony would be of no value. The letters were written, and as it would take a good while to receive the replies the lecturer had time to make a tour, which carried him as far west as Chicago and gave him an opportunity to tell the great news to his mother in St. Louis. Promptly upon his return he sought an interview with his prospective father-in-law. Mr. Langdon had rather a solemn look. Clemens asked:

## A VISIT TO ELMIRA

"You've heard from those gentlemen out there?"

"Yes, and from another gentleman I wrote concerning you."

"They don't appear to have been very enthusiastic, from your manner."

"Well, yes, some of them were."

"I suppose I may ask what particular form their emotion took."

"Oh yes, yes! They agree unanimously that you are a brilliant, able man—a man with a future, and that you would make about the worst husband on record."

The applicant had a forlorn look. "There is nothing very evasive about that, is there?"

Langdon reflected. "Haven't you any other friend that you could suggest?"

"Apparently none whose testimony would be valuable."

Jervis Langdon held out his hand. "You have at least one," he said. "I believe in you. I know you better than they do."

The engagement of Samuel Langhorne Clemens and Olivia Lewis Langdon was ratified next day, February 4, 1869.



## XXIX

### A NEW BOOK, A NEW PAPER AND A WEDDING

MARK TWAIN closed his lecture tour in March and went immediately to Elmira. He had earned something like eight thousand dollars, not a bad return for a first season on the circuit.

Final proofs of his book were coming now from Bliss, and he and Livy Langdon read them together. He realized presently that she had both literary perception and refined tastes. She became, in fact, his editor, during those happy courtship days—a position she held until her death. The world owes a large debt of gratitude to Mark Twain's wife, who from the very beginning—and always, so far as in her strength she was able—inspired him to give only his worthiest to the world. That refining influence counseled by Anson Burlingame, and for a time enjoyed in the society of Mrs. Fairbanks on the *Quaker City*, Olivia Langdon now contributed in full measure.

In a letter to Bliss we get the first hint of the title of the new book, which was to be:

#### THE INNOCENTS ABROAD

OR

#### THE NEW PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

It was to have been issued in the spring, but it was not until the early part of June that the last

## A NEW BOOK AND A WEDDING

chapters were revised and returned. The first edition was to be twenty thousand, a large number for any book of travel, even to-day. On July 20, 1869, the first copy was ready. By August the deliveries were in full swing.

It was a success from the start. More than five thousand copies were disposed of in August, and thirty-one thousand had been sold by the first of the year. If Mark Twain was not already famous, he became unquestionably so now. Newspapers chorused their enthusiasm. The public acclaimed him as the greatest humorist of the age.

It is curious to reflect that Samuel Clemens still did not regard himself as a literary man. It would seem at this time that he did not even contemplate the publication of another book. His thought was to own a paper, to settle himself in journalism. He contemplated the purchase of an interest in the *Cleveland Herald*, but then an opportunity came to acquire a third ownership in the *Buffalo Express*. Buffalo was nearer to Elmira, and Mr. Langdon, anxious that this purchase should be concluded, provided a part of the funds. The new editor entered upon his duties in August, and in the issue of August 18th published a salutatory, in the course of which he said:

Being a stranger, it would be immodest for me to suddenly and violently assume the associate editorship of the *Buffalo Express* without a single word of comfort or encouragement to the unoffending patrons of the paper, who are about to be exposed to constant attacks of my wisdom and learning. . . . I am not going to hurt the paper deliberately and intentionally at any time. I am not going to introduce any startling reforms

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

nor in any way attempt to make trouble. . . . I shall not often meddle with politics, because we have a political editor who is already excellent and only needs to serve a term or two in the penitentiary to be perfect.

He did not at once, however, settle down to editorial work. His wedding-day had been set for early in the year and he had agreed with Redpath to cover the lecture circuit during the winter. Redpath's lyceum headquarters were in Boston, and Clemens made his headquarters there, along with such congenial spirits as Josh Billings (Henry W. Shaw) and Petroleum V. Nasby (David R. Locke), popular lecturers of that day. It was during this period that he met, one day, in the office of the *Atlantic Monthly*, William Dean Howells, at that time its assistant editor. Howells had read *The Innocents Abroad* with enjoyment, though perhaps with some slight reservations, for he was not then fully emancipated as to some of its heresies. He also found the personality of Mark Twain, for the moment, just a bit startling. Yet the two men were drawn to each other almost from the beginning, and in a little while were devoted friends.

Samuel Clemens and Olivia Langdon were married February 2, 1870, within two days of the anniversary of their engagement. A few days before the wedding Clemens wrote a long letter to Jim Gillis, out in the Tuolumne Hills, recalling their days at Angel's Camp and the absurd frog story, which he declared had been the beginning of his good fortune. At the close he told of his approaching marriage. He wrote:

## A NEW BOOK AND A WEDDING

You can't come so far, Jim, but still I cordially *invite* you to come, anyhow, and I invite Dick too. And if you two boys *were* to land here on that pleasant occasion we would make you right royally welcome.

It had been only five years before, that day in Angel's Camp, but how far away it seemed to him now!

Clemens received an invitation to lecture on the night of February 2d. He replied that he was sorry to disappoint the applicant, but was obliged to do so, for on that evening he was going to marry a young lady, and that he would rather marry that young lady than to deliver all the lectures in the world.

On the morning of the wedding day Mark Twain received from his publishers a royalty check of four thousand dollars, the accumulation of three months' sales, a cheerful beginning. The wedding was a home affair. The Rev. Joseph H. Twichell and Harmony, his wife, came over from Hartford; Twichell to assist the Rev. Thomas K. Beecher in performing the ceremony. Jane Clemens could not come, nor Orion. But Pamela, a widow now, and her daughter Annie, a young lady, arrived from St. Louis. About one hundred guests collected in the Langdon parlors, those quiet, stately rooms that were to hold so much of his history—so much of the story of life and death—that now made its beginning there. It was at seven in the evening that they were married. The bride danced with her father, and Mr. Beecher reported, at the meeting which he attended later, that she was very beautiful and wore

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

the longest white gloves he had ever seen; he declared they reached to her shoulders.

On the following afternoon the wedding party, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. Langdon, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Crane, and Mr. and Mrs. Beecher, set out for Buffalo. Through a Mr. Slee, Mr. Langdon's agent in that city, Clemens had engaged, as he supposed, accommodations in an unpretentious boarding house, for it was his purpose to begin his married life quite modestly. Jervis Langdon had another plan, which his family and Mr. Slee had helped him carry out. But of this Clemens knew nothing.

It was nine o'clock at night when the party reached Buffalo and found Mr. Slee waiting at the station with sleighs to convey them to the "boarding house" he had selected. They started, and the sleigh containing the bride and groom soon fell behind and drove about rather aimlessly, apparently going nowhere in particular. This disturbed the groom a good deal, for he thought it proper that they should arrive first, to receive their guests. He criticized Slee's poor judgment in selecting a house that was so hard to find, and when at last they turned into Delaware Avenue, Buffalo's finest street, and stopped before one of the most attractive residences, he was troubled concerning the richness of the locality.

They were on the steps when the doors opened, and a perfect fairyland of lights and decorations was revealed within. The friends who had gone ahead came out with greetings to lead in the bride and groom. Servants stepped forward to take

## A NEW BOOK AND A WEDDING

their bags and wraps. They were ushered inside; were led through beautiful rooms all newly painted and garnished. The bridegroom was dazed, unable to understand the meaning of it all. At last his young wife put her hand upon his arm.

"Don't you understand, Youth?" she said (that was always her name for him). "Don't you understand? It is ours, all ours—everything—a gift from father."

But even then he could not grasp it; not at first; not until Mr. Langdon brought a little box and, opening it, handed them the deeds. Nobody quite remembers what was the first remark that Samuel Clemens made, but either then or a little later he said:

"Mr. Langdon, whenever you are in Buffalo, if it's twice a year, come right here. Bring your bag and stay overnight, if you want to. It sha'n't cost you a cent."

## THE YEAR AT BUFFALO

BUFFALO was no place for Mark Twain, and he presently found it out. He was already much more than a mere journalist—at least he was something different. He was an author of world size; his place was among men of his own caliber and kind.

He could not at once realize this. He thought his success had been in the nature of an accident—something he was not likely to repeat.

That he worked hard there is plenty of evidence. He wrote editorials, sketches, and what not for the *Express*. His hours were not regular, but they were long. Often he was at his desk at eight in the morning and remained there until ten or eleven at night. In addition to his work on the paper he undertook a department for a new magazine, the *Galaxy*, for which he was to write several pages of miscellany each month under the general head of "Memoranda." It was an independent, go-as-you-please department, filled with comment, criticism, sketches humorous and otherwise, according to the author's fancy.

Neither the work in the *Galaxy* nor the *Express* represented Mark Twain at his best. He was working under difficulties. After a few months of

## THE YEAR AT BUFFALO

happiness, sorrow and trouble visited the home on Delaware Avenue. Jervis Langdon was never able to accept his son-in-law's playful invitation to visit him. His health failed that spring, and after a trip to the South he returned to Elmira to die. Mrs. Clemens, who adored her father, hurried to his bedside, and her husband presently followed. They nursed him night and day, and for a time he seemed to rally, but early in August the end came. It was the beginning of a series of disasters that continued during the remaining period of their Buffalo residence. Mrs. Clemens, worn by the strain of watching, and bowed by her father's death, invited an old school friend, Miss Emma Nye, to visit her. Miss Nye had hardly arrived when she was stricken with typhoid fever. Now followed another long vigil of anxiety and nursing, ending with the death of the visitor. The young wife was by this time in very delicate health. Another friend came to cheer her, and on this friend's departure Mrs. Clemens drove to the railway station—a hurried trip over rough cobbled streets. She was prostrated on her return, and a little later, November 7, 1870, a baby boy, Langdon, was prematurely born. A dangerous illness of both mother and child followed. One may easily imagine that Mark Twain found it difficult to keep up his humorous writing under conditions like these.

Bliss meantime wanted another book and had journeyed to Elmira during Mr. Langdon's illness to close the contract. Clemens had signed the contract and begun the story of his Western adven-



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

tures, but had neither the time nor the spirit to continue. Discouraged, he agreed with Mrs. Clemens to dispose of their Buffalo interests at the first opportunity and find a home elsewhere. He gave up the *Galaxy* department forthwith. In a brief valedictory he said:

I have now written for the *Galaxy* a year. For the last eight months, with hardly an interval, I have had for my fellows and comrades night and day, doctors and watchers of the sick. During these eight months death has taken two members of my home circle and malignantly threatened two others. All this I have experienced, yet all the time have been under contract to furnish "humorous" matter, once a month, for this magazine. I am speaking the exact truth in the above details. Please to put yourself in my place and contemplate the grisly grotesqueness of the situation.

The *Galaxy* department and his work on the *Express* were Mark Twain's farewell to journalism. At no point had he reached the high standard of *The Innocents Abroad*. The circumstances of production had been hard; a dingy newspaper office and a sorrow-stricken home could provide little in the way of inspiration.



MARK TWAIN'S BIRTHPLACE



MARK TWAIN AT THE OLD HOME IN HANNIBAL, 1901



THE HARTFORD HOME, BUILT IN 1873-74



VIEW FROM THE WINDOW OF THE HARTFORD HOME

## XXXI

### QUARRY FARM AND HARTFORD

CLEMENS sold his interest in the *Express* at considerable sacrifice, glad to be rid of it at any price. Then with the first spring days he carried Mrs. Clemens and little Langdon to a hilltop above Elmira, Quarry Farm, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Crane. It was a beautiful spot overlooking the Chemung River, an ideal place for summertime. The air and quiet rest proved beneficial to the invalids, and Mark Twain resumed work there on his new book.

The result did not satisfy him. He feared he had got out of the old swing. Joe Goodman on his way east dropped off at Elmira, and Mark Twain hurried him to the farm. Scarcely had they reached there when the author, explaining his anxiety, put the first chapters of the manuscript into the visitor's hands. Seating himself by a window, Goodman began to read deliberately and critically. He did not know that Clemens was watching him until suddenly the latter exclaimed:

"I knew it! I knew it! I am writing nothing but rot! You have sat there all this time, reading without a smile and pitying the ass I am making of myself. But I am not wholly to blame. I am not

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

strong enough to write against fate. I have been trying to write a funny book, with dead people and sickness everywhere. Oh, Joe, I wish to God I could die, myself!" •

"Mark," said Goodman, "I ~~was~~ reading critically, not for amusement, and so far as I have read and can judge, this is one of the best things you have ever written. I have found it perfectly absorbing. You are doing a great book."

Clemens knew that Goodman never spoke idly and in a moment was all enthusiasm, full of ideas for his story. He offered to pay Goodman a salary to keep him company and furnish him inspiration. Goodman remained without salary, and the two took long walks together, recalling old Comstock days. They fell into the habit of visiting the unused quarry for which the farm had been named, and amused themselves by collecting geological specimens. Many of the best chapters of *Roughing It* came out of those walks. In May Clemens wrote Bliss that he had twelve hundred manuscript pages of the new book completed and was turning out copy at the rate of from thirty to sixty-five pages daily. He had now the greatest hopes for the book. In his letter he said:

When I get it done I want to see the man who will begin to read it and not finish it. Nothing grieves me now; nothing troubles me, nothing bothers me or gets my attention. I don't think of anything but the book, and don't have an hour's unhappiness about anything, and don't care two cents whether school keeps or not.

The family health had improved. His work was going well and he was in the clouds, accordingly.

## QUARRY FARM AND HARTFORD

He reconsidered his resolution not to lecture again. Selling the paper at a loss had left him financially cramped, and lecturing offered the quickest relief. He prepared a lecture on Artemus Ward, another on pleasant characters he had met, and a third based on chapters of the new book.

"During July I'll decide which one I like best," he wrote Redpath, and cautioned him not to make engagements for lectures in churches. "I never made a success of a lecture in a church yet. People are afraid to laugh in a church."

Meantime Hartford had been selected by Mr. and Mrs. Clemens as their place of residence. They felt that they could not go back to their house in Buffalo, and they presently disposed of it. Both of them had pleasant acquaintances in Hartford; there was a distinct literary circle in that city which the Buffalo of those days lacked. The fine Hooker house on Forest Street was leased; the Buffalo house was closed, its handsome furnishings shipped to Hartford. In the year and a half of their occupancy it had seen well-nigh all the round of life. This was in the autumn of 1871.

Mark Twain lectured pretty steadily that winter, and was a good deal with the Boston group, which included Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Howells, also Bret Harte, who by this time had made his regal progress across the country and was in the splendid morning of his fame. Of the three lectures which Clemens had written he found that the chapters from *Roughing It* gave the best entertainment. He had full houses everywhere, and before the end of

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

the season had straightened out his financial difficulties. As usual, he was sick of the platform, anxious for the season to end. He telegraphed Redpath at the end of February:

If I had another engagement I ~~would~~ ~~not~~ before I would fill it.

Proofs of the new book had been following him, and in February *Roughing It* was ready to be issued from the press. Its advance sale had been large and Mark Twain resolved in future to confine himself strictly to the trade of authorship. If he only could have held to that resolution, what sorrow and trouble he would have saved himself in the days to come!

*Roughing It* in a different way is quite as remarkable as *The Innocents Abroad*. If it has less charm, it has a more direct interest, and it is certainly not without charm. It was accepted by the public for just what it was and is—a great picture of the overland pioneer days, a period now forever gone. Its sale was immediate and satisfactory, aggregating about forty thousand copies during the first three months. It did not, however, hold its place with *The Innocents*, which developed a staying quality unsurpassed by any other book of travel, and maintained to this day.

## XXXII

### TRIP TO ENGLAND

THE year of 1872 proved an eventful one for Mark Twain. In March his second child, a little girl, named Olivia Susan, for her mother and aunt, was born. Three months later, in Hartford, little Langdon Clemens died. Frail from the beginning, he had been unable to survive a heavy cold ending with an attack of diphtheria.

The family did not return to Elmira that year, believing the seashore would be better for Mrs. Clemens and the little girl. They went to Saybrook, Connecticut, to Fenwick Hall, where Clemens did but little work, though he managed to invent a self-pasting scrapbook, and would seem to have begun there a first draft of *Tom Sawyer*, apparently planned in dramatic form. But just then he conceived the notion of writing a book on England, and as he wished to make the experiment of English copyright for *Roughing It*, he decided to sail at once on this double errand. He gave out no word of the book idea and seems to have given up the notion some weeks after his arrival on the other side. He made a quantity of notes, filling several stylographic notebooks, but none of the matter was ever used.

Probably he intended to write something in the nature of a humorous satire of English life, but found



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

English society quite different from his expectations. In the first place, they at once made a lion of him, flocking about him as if he had been a visiting ruler, as indeed he was in his special literary domain. Never at home had he received such attentions. Howells has written:

In England rank, fashion, and culture rejoiced in him. Lord Mayors, Lord Chief Justices, and magnates of many kinds were his hosts; he was desired in country houses, and his bold genius captivated the favor of periodicals that spurned the rest of our nation.

He found, too, that English home life was a substantial and altogether an admirable institution, that English culture and social customs furnished examples to be followed rather than satirized. There was, indeed, nothing for him to make a book—his kind of a book—out of. All his impressions of England were happy ones. England even sustained his copyright on *Roughing It*, though certainly the law at this time was not very clearly defined. He was urged to lecture, but declined to do so, promising, however, to return the following year.

A number of amusing incidents are related of his London sojourn. Once at a banquet, when the list of distinguished names was being read and the diners were applauding, he was conversing with a friend at his side, joining in the applause without listening, accordingly as the others led. Finally a name was announced which was followed by a great outburst of handclapping. Mark Twain, not to be outdone in his approval, stoutly kept his hands

## A TRIP TO ENGLAND

going when all the others had finished. Then of his neighbor he asked:

"Whose name was that we were just applauding?"

"Mark Twain's."

But they took it as one of his jokes. Whatever he did or said, they found highly amusing. On another occasion a speaker humorously referred to his American habit of carrying a cotton umbrella. His reply, that he carried a cotton umbrella because it was the only kind that an Englishman wouldn't steal, traveled all over England next day as one of the finest examples of modern repartee. To his mother he wrote:

I came here to take notes for a book, but I haven't done much but attend dinners and make speeches. I've had a jolly good time, and I do hate to go away from these English folk; they make a stranger feel entirely at home and they laugh so easily that it is a comfort to make after-dinner speeches here.

He sailed for home November 12th, on the *Batavia*, loaded with Christmas presents for everybody: jewelry, furs, laces, even a practical steam-engine for his little namesake, Pamela's son, Samuel Moffett.

## XXXIII

### "THE GILDED AGE"

CLEMENS had no intention of ever lecturing again, and refused the offers that Redpath regularly sent him. His success in England had added largely to his prestige at home. He was not yet the foremost American author, but undoubtedly he had become the most popular. Edwin Whipple wrote:

Mark Twain is regarded chiefly as a humorist, but the exercise of his real talents would rank him with the ablest of our authors in the past fifty years.

It was during this winter (1872-73) that the Clemens household enjoyed its first real home life in Hartford—its first real home life anywhere since those earliest months of marriage. Clemens himself was at home, and the family health was comparatively good. Their house was in a literary neighborhood, that corner of Hartford then known as "Nook Farm." The Warners, the Stowes and other congenial spirits lived near by.

One night when Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dudley Warner were dining with Mr. and Mrs. Clemens there rose a lively discussion concerning recently published novels. The two husbands were inclined to criticize the books in which their wives were

399

If he dreamed at all,  
that night, no gossiping spirit  
disturbed his visions to whisper  
in his ear of certain events  
transpiring in the East, more  
than a thousand miles away,  
that were destined to develop  
influences which would ~~at~~  
on very distant day pro-  
foundly affect the fate &  
fortunes of the Hawkins  
family.

Now comes "Warner's  
first Chapter."

A PAGE FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE "GILDED AGE"

The end of Mark Twain's first installment.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

finding pleasure, whereupon the wives promptly suggested that their husbands produce better ones. This being somewhat in the nature of a challenge, it was promptly accepted as such—mutually accepted; that is to say, in partnership. Clemens and Warner declared that they would do a novel together, and would begin it forthwith. There was some further talk, and next day Mark Twain was hard at work on the first chapters of *The Gilded Age*. Already he had the beginning of a story in his mind, but had been unwilling to undertake a work of fiction alone. His purpose was to write a tale around his mother's cousin, James Lampton—to let that gentle visionary stand as the central figure against a proper background.

He worked with enthusiasm and finished the first eleven chapters in a comparatively brief time. These he read aloud to Warner, who took up the tale at this point and began to inject new characters and romance through the next twelve chapters. So they worked alternately "in the superstition," as Mark Twain once declared, "that we were writing one coherent yarn, when I suppose, as a matter of fact, we were writing two *incoherent* ones."

The book begun in February was finished in April, and the result, if not highly artistic, was astonishingly good reading. Mark Twain's part in it will stand with some of his best work. The character of Colonel Sellers has taken its place as a figure in American development. His saying, "There's millions in it," has passed into the language.

## BACK IN LONDON AGAIN

**M**R. AND MRS. CLEMENS decided to make Hartford their permanent home. They bought a plot of land on Farmington Avenue, still nearer to their literary neighbors, and set about plans for building. In May, when the new house was well started, they concluded to leave it in the hands of the architect and builder, and with Miss Clara Spaulding, a girlhood friend of Mrs. Clemens, and little Susy, now something more than a year old, they sailed for England, on a long holiday.

Whatever honors Mark Twain may have received on his first trip to England, they were doubled now. His rooms at the Langham Hotel were like a court. Robert Browning, Turgenev, Sir John Millais, Lord Houghton, and Sir Charles Dilke were among those who called to pay their respects. Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, and other popular novelists of that day haunted the Langham, fascinated by Mark Twain's personality and story-telling. Reade invited him to collaborate on a novel.

The excitement and demands of London life told on Mrs. Clemens. She delighted in the cordial English hospitality, but her endurance was limited. Near the end of July they canceled all social engagements and took refuge in Edinburgh, at Veitch's

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

family hotel in George Street. Here she had a collapse of strength that required the attention of a physician. Clemens, unacquainted with Edinburgh, remembered only that Dr. John Brown, who had written *Rab and His Friends*, lived there. Learning the address, he walked round to 23 Rutland Street and introduced himself. Doctor Brown came at once, and Mrs. Clemens promptly improved under his treatment.

The acquaintance did not end there. For nearly a month the creator of "Rab" called daily and the members of the two families became the closest friends. Little Susy, whom he called "Megalopis" because of her wonderful eyes, became his special playmate. They romped through the hotel rooms together with that complete abandon which few grown persons can assume in their play with children and not all children can assume in their play with grown-ups.

The Clemens family often joined Doctor Brown in his professional rounds. He was beloved by everyone and especially by all dogs, of whom he was the chief protector.

Edinburgh had its social affairs, too, though very quiet ones. On her recovery Mrs. Clemens made friends and memories that remained always very dear to her. In a letter to her sister, August 24th:

We leave Edinburgh to-morrow, with sincere regret; we have had such a delightful stay here—we do so regret leaving Dr. Brown and his sister, thinking that we shall probably never see them again.

## BACK IN LONDON AGAIN

Mark Twain remembered his promise to lecture in London, and on October 13, 1873, appeared in the Queen's Concert Rooms, Hanover Square, and delivered "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands." The papers heralded the event and the house was packed. The lecturer appeared on the platform, with no one to introduce him. He began apologetically by saying that Mr. Clemens had fully expected to be present. Many of the audience thought it was the manager and loud murmurs arose. The lecturer lifted his hand and added, "I am happy to say that Mark Twain is present and will now give his lecture." Whereupon the audience recovered and roared its approval.

For five successive nights and a Saturday matinée the culture and fashion of London thronged to hear him discourse of their "Fellow Savages." Nothing of the kind had happened in London before. The papers for a week devoted columns of space to appreciation and editorial comment. On no occasion in his own country had his triumph been so complete.

But it was only a beginning. Three days following his lecture course he sailed with his little family for America, then promptly returned alone, and with George Doiby<sup>1</sup> as his manager was back in London, lecturing again, after barely a month's absence. For two months he filled the big Hanover Square room, giving for the most part his *Roughing It* lecture. It was only toward the end of this record engagement that the audience showed any signs of diminishing.

<sup>1</sup> Formerly agent of Charles Dickens.



## XXXV

### TOM SAWYER, COLONEL SELLERS, AND THE NEW HOME

MARK TWAIN returned to America at the end of January, 1874, and was immediately besieged by Redpath to make the lecture circuit. He vowed that he would never start on another tour, but yielded to the extent of giving a lecture here and there during February. Finally, on the 3d of March he telegraphed to his tormentor:

Why don't you congratulate me? I never expect to stand on a lecture platform again after Thursday night.

Howells and Aldrich came over from Boston for a visit, and with Twichell and Charles Dudley Warner two happy days and evenings passed—"days," says Howells, "such as the aging sun no longer shines on in his round."

The new house was coming along well, but would not be ready before autumn. Leaving it once more in the hands of the builders, the owners went to Quarry Farm, and in a cozy little study which Mrs. Crane had built for him on the hillside Mark Twain began a story which he had been planning for some time, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. The study was an inspiring place and he worked well and rapidly. To Twichell he wrote of his new retreat:

## THE NEW HOME

It is the loveliest study you ever saw. It is octagonal, with a peaked roof, each face filled with a spacious window, and it sits perched in complete isolation on the top of an elevation that commands leagues of valley and city and retreating ranges of distant blue hills.

•

He did not ~~work~~ steadily on the Tom Sawyer book; perhaps he ran out of incident for the time, or it may be that other subjects furnished a sharper interest. He did some short sketches, one of which, "A True Story Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It"—a story really told to him by Mrs. Crane's cook, "Auntie Cord"—was taken by Howells for the *Atlantic Monthly*—Mark Twain's first acceptance by that magazine.

It also happened that summer that a California writer named Densmore produced a play founded on *The Gilded Age*, with John T. Raymond in the part of Colonel Sellers. Clemens heard of this through Goodman, and promptly took steps in the matter. He had already planned to write a play around the character of Colonel Sellers and had taken out dramatic copyright. He therefore stopped the California production, wrote the dramatist a friendly letter, and in the end bought the play of him. He now rewrote it, enlarging upon the scenes to bring out the character of Sellers. Raymond, who had demonstrated his power in the part, came on, and a contract was closed with him for its production. It proved a great success and Raymond played it for several years. As a dramatic composition its rank was not high, but the character of Sellers himself made a strong human appeal. He became as popular

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

on the stage as he had been in the book, and returned a large profit both to actor and to dramatist.

The new house in Hartford was not quite ready when its owners returned, but they moved into such portions of it as were available, and little by little extended their occupation, until at last the workmen were gone and the handsome furnishings were in place.

It was quite a wonderful house. It stood on the edge of a shady slope that fell away to a quiet stream. Its architecture in no way resembled the big square Hartford mansions of the period. There were balconies and wings and gables; also an immense veranda that at one end looked down the shaded slope.

It was filled with beautiful things. Mrs. Clemens had bought freely during her stay in Europe, and had excellent taste in the matter of furnishings. In the library was an old carved mantel, picked up in Scotland, salvage from a ruined castle. Across the top of the fireplace was a brass plate with the motto, "The ornament of a house is the friends that frequent it"—surely never more appropriately inscribed.

Many visitors have tried to express the charm of Mark Twain's home. Howells assures us that there never was another like it, and we may accept his statement. Home of one of the most unusual and unaccountable personalities in the world, it was nevertheless perfectly and serenely ordered. Mark Twain was not responsible for this condition; it was around his wife that its affairs steadily revolved.

## THE NEW HOME

In the four and a half years of their marriage Olivia Clemens had become something more than the half-timid, inexperienced girl of her wedding day. In spite of her delicate physique and her uncertainty of health, she capably undertook the management of this large, new house and supervised its economies. Any one of her undertakings was sufficient for one woman, but she compassed them all. No children had more careful training than hers, no husband more devoted attendance and companionship, no household was ever directed with a sweeter and gentler grace or with greater perfection of detail. When distinguished visitors came to seek out America's most picturesque literary figure she gave welcome to them all, and filled her place at his side with such sweet and capable dignity that those who came to pay their duties to him often returned to offer even greater devotion to his companion. Says Howells:

She was, in a way, the loveliest person I have ever seen—the gentlest, the kindest, without a touch of weakness; she united wonderful tact with wonderful truth, and Clemens not only accepted her rule implicitly, but he rejoiced, he gloried in it.

And again Howells wrote:

Marriages are what the parties to them alone really know them to be, but from the outside I should say that this marriage was one of the most perfect.

## XXXVI

### THE WALK TO BOSTON, AND "OLD TIMES ON THE MISSISSIPPI"

**I**N those days when the Rev. Joseph Twichell and Mark Twain were young men they were fond of taking long walks—excursions filled with pleasant talk that covered all the range of human possibility. There was a wooden structure about five miles from Hartford known as Talcott's Tower, and this was one of their favorite objectives. They talked so continuously that they scarcely noticed the distance, and one day decided that they could quite easily walk from Hartford to Boston, a distance of about a hundred miles.

They grew enthusiastic over the idea, and decided to start soon. On the morning of November 12, 1874, they left Twichell's house in a carriage, drove to the east end of Hartford bridge, and there took the road—Twichell carrying a little bag, and Clemens a basket of lunch. It turned out to be a good day for walking; by evening they had reached Westford, a distance of twenty-eight miles. The tour may be said to have ended there. After an uneasy night, Clemens awoke exceedingly lame and footsore. Stimulated by Twichell, he limped and swore six miles farther to North Ashford, then gave it up. He telegraphed Redpath of their approach:

## THE WALK TO BOSTON

We have made thirty-five miles in less than five days. This demonstrates that the thing can be done. Shall now finish by rail. Did you have any bets on us?

Word was also sent to Howells, who prepared a reception for them at his house—a combination of pleasant company and warm, substantial food. Clemens was at his best that night. In his book, *My Mark Twain*, Howells tells us:

I can see him now as he stood up in the midst of our friends, with his head thrown back, and in his hand a dish of those scalloped oysters without which no party in Cambridge was really a party, exulting in the tale of his adventure, which had abounded in the most original characters and amusing incidents at every mile of their progress.

Next night Mark Twain gave a dinner to Howells, Aldrich, and others of his literary set. He assured them that he and Twichell were going to make an annual pedestrian tour to Boston.

Howells at this time was urging Mark Twain to do some extended feature for the *Atlantic*, or at least something for the January number. Clemens had about given up the thought, when it happened, soon after their return to Hartford, that during one of their walks together he related to Twichell something of his piloting days. Home from the walk, he wrote Howells:

I take back the remark that I can't write for the January number, for Twichell and I have had a long walk in the woods, and I got to telling him about old Mississippi days of steamboating glory and grandeur as I saw them (during four years) from the pilot house. He said, "What a virgin subject to hurl into a magazine." I hadn't thought of that before. Would you like a series of papers to run through three months or six or nine—or about four months, say?

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Howells joyfully accepted the proposed series. He was of a piloting family, himself. Clemens did not delay his first article, and upon its arrival Howells wrote that it made the water in his ice pitcher muddy to read it.

Those early Mississippi chapters contain some of Mark Twain's very best writing. He knew the subject so well, and loved it so much. When the first number appeared in the *Atlantic*, John Hay wrote the author: "It is perfect; no more nor less. I don't see how you do it." And added, "You know what my opinion is of time not spent with you." Howells urged him not to drop the series until he got every bit of anecdote and reminiscence out of it. The papers ran through seven numbers of the *Atlantic* and added materially to their author's literary fame. They were everywhere reprinted by the newspapers, and pirated in book form by a Canadian publisher. The author himself did not include them in a volume until many years later.

Clemens bought a typewriter on the trip to Boston, the first one he had ever seen. It was a primitive affair—its type all capitals. But he was fascinated by it and put in a good deal of time writing letters to friends, for practice. Some of the Mississippi chapters were copied on it.

But it did not stay in order. The keys had a way of sticking and he declared it was ruining his morals. He finally gave it to Howells, because "Howells had no morals, anyway." What eventually became of it has not been learned.

That was a busy summer for Mark Twain. He

## THE WALK TO BOSTON

had a book in press—*Sketches New and Old*, which included the Jumping Frog tale and some of his earlier, as well as many of his later, stories. Also he had renewed work on the Tom Sawyer book, which he brought to a finish early in July. He was in Hartford at this time, and wrote to Howells:

I have finished the story and didn't take the chap beyond boyhood. . . . If I went on now and took him into manhood, he would lie, like all the one-horse men in literature, and the reader would conceive a hearty contempt for him.

He added that it was not a boy's book at all. A view with which Howells did not in the least agree. The latter wrote:

It is altogether the best boy story I ever read. It will be an immense success, but I think you ought to treat it explicitly as a boy's story; grown-ups will enjoy it just as much if you do, and if you should put it forth as a study of boy character from the grown-up point of view you give the wrong key to it.

The book was not published until something more than a year later, December, 1876. It made an immediate hit and remained one of Mark Twain's most successful books, for readers of all ages.



## XXXVII

CAMBRIDGE—ELMIRA—"HUCK FINN"—"AH SIN"—  
"PRINCE AND PAUPER"

CLEMENS and his wife made trips to Boston now and then, to visit the Howellses and to meet the members of the Cambridge literary set. Clemens himself was frequently in Cambridge, where the Howells home was always waiting for him and was promptly adjusted to his requirements without regard to its former routine. In his *My Mark Twain* Howells tells how his guest would take a room at the Parker House and perhaps dress for dinner, to arrive later at Cambridge in evening dress and slippers, joyously remaining with them for a day or more in that guise, putting on an overcoat and a pair of rubbers when he went out for a walk. Also, how he smoked continuously in every room of the house—smoked during every waking moment—and how Howells, mindful of his insurance, sometimes slipped in and removed the still burning cigar, after he was asleep. He was a perpetual joy to the Howells family when he was there, even though the household required a general reorganization when he was gone. Mildred Howells remembers how, as a very little girl, she was cautioned by her mother not to ask for anything she wanted at the table when company was present, but to speak privately of it

## CAMBRIDGE AND ELMIRA

to her. Miss Howells declares that while Mark Twain was their guest she nearly starved, because it was impossible to get her mother's attention, and Mrs. Howells, after one of those visits of hilarity and disorder, said, "Well, it most kills me, but it pays," a remark which Clemens himself vastly enjoyed.

Howells once wrote to him:

Your visit was a perfect ovation for us; we ~~never~~ enjoy anything so much as those visits of yours. The smoke and the Scotch and the late hours almost kill us; but we look each other in the eyes when you are gone, and say what a glorious time it was, and air the library, and begin sleeping and longing to have you back again.

Most of the summers Mark Twain spent at Quarry Farm. There were two little girls now, Susy and Clara, and the farm was a lovely place for them. It had plenty of animals, and a wide, safe, grassy expanse before the house, for a playground. Once Clemens wrote to Doctor Brown, that they went to Elmira to be "hermits and eschew caves and live in the sun." Mark Twain did most of his writing in Elmira. He found the little octagonal study, built for him by Mrs. Crane, an inspiring place, and here in 1876 he made a beginning on a book which was to supplement *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*—*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

He had no great faith in his beginning. In a letter of that time he wrote, "I like it only tolerably well, as far as I have gone, and may possibly pigeon-hole or burn the manuscript when it is done"—this of the story which, of his books of pure fiction, will

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

perhaps longest survive. He gave up the effort, presently, with the tale about half completed, and let it lie unfinished for years. Clearly he was not in the mood. He did a number of other things that summer, but they were of no particular importance.

That winter Bret Harte came to Hartford, and they wrote a play together. It was constructed around a Chinese character to be played by Charles Parsloe, famous in such parts. They called the play "Ah Sin" and they had a very good time writing it, though Clemens and Harte were not as congenial as in their pioneer days. Success had not been good for Harte. It had disturbed his general psychology; some of his habits were open to criticism. In time Clemens and Harte became altogether estranged.

The play "Ah Sin" was only a partial success. It pleased a number of people very much. But it did not please enough people to warrant its continued production. It was tried in Washington, in New York, and later on the road, but was eventually abandoned to its fate and heard of no more.

Mark Twain did not give up the playwriting idea, and for a number of years was generally working at some dramatic composition or other, but without much success. He did not have the trick of playwriting. It was just at this time, however, that he began work on a story full of dramatic possibilities, to be developed later by other hands.

One day, among the books at Quarry Farm, he came upon a little juvenile volume by Charlotte M. Yonge, entitled *The Prince and the Page*. It was the

## CAMBRIDGE AND ELMIRA

story of a prince, disguised as a blind beggar through a period of years. Reading it, Mark Twain developed an idea for a tale of his own. Not only would he have a prince in the guise of a beggar, but a beggar in the guise of a prince. He would have them change places in the world and each learn the burden of the other's life.

He began work immediately, finding some difficulty at first in selecting his hero. Originally his idea had been to use the late King Edward VII at about fifteen, but found that he could not convincingly lose a prince among the slums of modern London and have his proud estate denied and jeered at by the mob. So he followed back through history, looking for the proper time and prince, until he came to little Edward Tudor, son of Henry VIII. The little prince was really too young, but no matter, he would do.

His original thought had been to write a play, but then he decided to begin his new venture in story form. He put away all thought of everything cheap and modern, steeped himself in the period of his story, and began one of the loveliest tales ever written of old English life. He finished about four hundred pages of the manuscript that summer (1877), then, as the inspiration seemed to lag, put it aside, as was his habit, until his interest in the theme should be renewed. It was a long wait, as usual. He did not touch the story again for more than two years.

## XXXVIII

### AN ENTERTAINER AT HOME

TEN years earlier, when Mark Twain had first lectured in New York City, at the Cooper Union, the cartoonist, Thomas Nast, whose pictures were then coming into notice, proposed to him that they undertake a lecture tour together—Clemens to speak and Nast simultaneously to illustrate with quick sketches. At the time Mark Twain had been unable to enter into such an arrangement. Now, however, the thought appealed to him; he wrote Nast a letter proposing that they arrange for a joint tour. In part he said:

MY DEAR NAST:

I did not think I should ever stand on a platform again until the time was come for me to say "I die innocent." But the same old offers keep arriving. I have declined them all, just as usual, though sorely tempted, as usual.

Now, I do not decline because I mind talking to an audience, but because (1) traveling alone is so heartbreakingly dreary, and (2) shouldering the whole show is such a cheer-killing responsibility.

Therefore, I now propose to you what you proposed to me in 1867, ten years ago (when I was unknown)—*viz.*, that you stand on the platform and make pictures, and I stand by you and black-guard the audience. I should enormously enjoy meandering around (to big towns—don't want to go to little ones), with you for company.

My idea is not to fatten the lecture agents and lyceums on the spoils, but to put all the ducats religiously into two equal piles and say to artist and lecturer, "Absorb these."

## AN ENTERTAINER AT HOME

It was a long letter, containing a full plan and a possible list of cities to be visited, with estimated receipts. Undoubtedly such a tour would have been successful, but Nast had been lecturing on his own account, and, though successful, had acquired a strong distaste for the platform. He declined and we may believe that Clemens was not greatly disappointed. He cared always more for his fireside happiness than for roaming the country as an entertainer.

Mark Twain was always sure of an audience at home. When friends were not there he still had little Clara and Susy, the most devoted and attentive listeners in the world. They had learned his gift as a romancer, and allowed him to be as extravagant as he pleased. They sometimes assisted by furnishing subjects. They would bring him a picture, requiring him to invent a story for it without a moment's delay. On one side of the library, along the bookshelves that joined the mantelpiece, were numerous ornaments and pictures. At one end was the head of a girl that they called "Emeline," and at the other was an oil painting of a cat. When other subjects failed, the romancer was obliged to build a story impromptu, beginning with the cat, working along through the bric-à-brac, and ending with Emeline. This was the unvarying program; he was not allowed to begin with Emeline and end with the cat, and he was not permitted to introduce an ornament from any other portion of the room. He could vary the *story* as much as he liked. In fact, he was required to do that, but the literary path from the

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

cat to Emeline must be duly followed, and the romancer remembered it his life long.

Clemens had a luxurious study in the new house, but gave it up to the children, for a playroom, transferring his writing quarters, first to a room over the stable, then to the billiard room at the top of the house. He really preferred the latter to any other locality. When his work did not go well he could knock the balls about for inspiration. When callers came he received them there and impressed them into the game. If they could play he was happy; if they could not he was happier still, for then he could beat them extravagantly, and he took a huge delight in such conquests.

Mark Twain was an inveterate billiard player to almost the last days of his life. In those Hartford years there was a group who came regularly each Friday evening. They played late, but never late enough for him. He seemed never to be tired; he would go on playing till the last man gave out from sheer weariness; then he would still go on knocking the balls about, alone. He liked to invent new games, and new rules for old games, often inventing a rule on the spur of the moment to fit some particular shot or position on the table. It amused him highly to do this and to pretend deep indignation when his opponents disqualified his ruling and rode him down.

## XXXIX

### TRAMPING ABROAD WITH TWICHELL

IT is unlikely that Mark Twain and his wife were ever happier than at this particular time. It seems almost too bad, now, that they should have closed their beautiful home that spring to make an extended European tour.

There were reasons, however. Mark Twain had published no important book recently, and had apparently lost interest in his two unfinished manuscripts of value, *The Prince and the Pauper* and *Huckleberry Finn*. A Mark Twain book was wanted by his publishers, and especially were they anxious for another book of travel. Clemens and his wife, therefore, decided to take up European residence for a year or more, to give the children the advantage of the German language, then very popular, and to obtain material for a new book. They began the study of German at home, and in April, 1878, sailed on the *Holsatia* for Hamburg, with Bayard Taylor and Murat Halstead as fellow travelers. Taylor was on his way to his post as minister to Germany. Halstead had come down the bay to bid a last farewell to his wife and daughter, passengers on the *Holsatia*, but had somehow managed to get overlooked and suddenly found himself on his way across the ocean with a very scanty ward-



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

robe indeed. Halstead, however, was a jolly, adaptable person, and Bayard Taylor, who was of the same ample size, provided him with clothes. It was a stormy two weeks' sailing, but good company made the voyage not altogether an unpleasant one.

The Clemens party proceeded to Heidelberg and were presently established at the beautiful Schloss Hotel, with wonderful glassed-in observation perches, commanding views of Heidelberg castle, the city below, the densely wooded hills, the far-flowing Neckar, and the mist-haunted valley of the Rhine. Clemens wrote enthusiastically to Howells of the situation, and presently sent a letter to the Rev. Joe Twichell, naming a date when Twichell should join him in Germany and become his guest on a walking tour, during which, as he expressed it, he would "dig material enough out of Joe to make it a sound investment." As a matter of fact he loved Twichell's companionship and was always inviting him to share his journeys—to Boston, to Bermuda, to Washington—wherever interest or fancy led him.

The plan for the walking tour had been partly arranged before the departure from Hartford. Twichell, now receiving the confirming news, wrote that it was a great day for him—that his third son had been happily born early that morning, and now this glorious gift of a tramp through Germany and Switzerland completed his blessings.

I am almost too joyful for pleasure. I labor with my felicities. How I shall get to sleep to-night I don't know, though I have had a good start in not having slept much last night. Oh, my!

## TRAMPING ABROAD

*do* you realize, Mark, what a symposium it is to me? I do . . . to walk with you and talk with you, for weeks together—why, it's my dream of luxury. . . .

SHOES—Mark, remember that ever so much of our pleasure depends upon your shoes. Don't fail to have adequate preparation in that department.

Meantime the Clemens party were having what amounted to a hand-to-hand struggle with the German tongue. Mark Twain got inspiration for his essay on the "Awful German Language" at this time.

Twichell arrived August 1st, as agreed. Clemens met him at Baden-Baden, and they at once set out on the tramp through the Black Forest, a happy, leisurely excursion, though they did not confine themselves to walking, but took a carriage or a donkey cart or a train—whatever convenient thing happened along. They idled and talked and gathered flowers, beguiling the way with discussion and entertaining tales. By and by they crossed over into Switzerland and considered the conquest of the Alps. The family followed by rail or diligence, and met them here and there when they rested from their wanderings. They climbed the Rigi, following which Twichell went on a little side trip while Clemens recovered. Then presently they were off to Interlaken, and then once more afoot they scaled the loneliness of Gemmi Pass, arriving some days later at Zermatt and the wonder of the Matterhorn. They did not scale the Matterhorn; they were content to look at it.

The association of the wanderers was a very intimate one. Twichell had a fine chance to study

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain's character under the trying conditions of travel, and in the letters to his wife his conclusions are reflected. Once he wrote:

A strange Mark, he is full of contradiction. I spoke last night of his sensitiveness to others' feelings. To-day the guide got behind, and came up as if he would like to go by, yet hesitated to do so. Mark paused, went aside and busied himself a minute picking a flower. In the halt the guide got by and resumed his place in front. Mark threw the flower away, saying: "I didn't want that. I only wanted to give the old man a chance to go on without seeming to pass us."

At another time he wrote:

His sensitive regard for others extends to animals. When we are driving his concern is all about the horse. He can't bear to see the whip used, or to see a horse pull hard.

There are many such things in the letters which Twichell sent home. Once he tells how they came upon a foaming, tumbling stream and Mark Twain amused himself throwing sticks and stones into the boiling water. Twichell pushed some driftwood into the racing torrent.

When I got back to the path Mark was running downstream after it as hard as he could go, throwing up his hands and shouting in the wildest ecstasy, and when a piece went over a fall and emerged to view in the foam below he would jump up and down and yell. He said afterward that he hadn't been so excited in three months. He acted just like a boy.

Twichell and Clemens finally closed their wanderings at Lausanne, where they joined Mrs. Clemens. Their Swiss holiday was ended. Twichell set out for home by way of England, and Clemens gave himself up to reflection and rest after his wanderings.

## TRAMPING ABROAD

He wrote Twichell a characteristic letter, assuring him of his deep affection and the rich pleasure their companionship had afforded him. In the course of it he said:

I am putting out of my mind all memory of the times when I misbehaved toward you and hurt you; I am resolved to consider it forgiven, and to store up and remember only the charming hours of the journeys and the times when I was not unworthy to be with you and share a companionship which to me stands first after Livy's. It is justifiable to do this; for why should I let my small infirmities of disposition live and grovel among my mental pictures of the eternal sublimities of the Alps.

The Clemens party remained another year in Europe. They spent a considerable time in Italy, then settled for the winter in Munich, where Mark Twain worked pretty steadily on the new book of travel. At times it seemed to him that his work went badly enough. Many chapters he threw aside or destroyed. He had the feeling that he had somehow lost the knack of descriptive narrative. Some of the omitted chapters were saved and used elsewhere; the "Stolen Elephant" was one of these, also the "Coffin Box" yarn, and the Pitcairn sketch.

The family went to Paris in the spring—a chilly, rainy season. Later they crossed over to England, where they found it no better, so that their European sojourn lacked sunshine at the end. Mark Twain met Darwin in England and learned that the great man was an admirer of his books. Darwin said that he always kept a copy of *The Innocents Abroad* by his bedside to read when he wanted to go to sleep. It was a compliment with a doubtful sound, but the

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

author was happy in the thought that his work could soothe the greatest thinker of the age.

They sailed in August, arriving in New York eleven days later. The papers reported that Mark Twain had grown older during his year and a half of absence and that his hair had turned quite gray. The family proceeded at once to Quarry Farm, and Clemens plunged into work on his book which was not yet finished. To Twichell he wrote:

I am revising my MS. I did not expect to like it, but I do. I have been knocking out early chapters for more than a year now, not because they have not merit, but merely because they hindered the flow of the narrative; it was a dredging process. . . . I believe it will be a readable book of travels. I cannot see that it lacks anything but information.

## XL

### "THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER" AND OTHER ENTERPRISES

WORK on the new book went well enough for a time; then it began to drag. Mark Twain was always more or less of an inspirational worker—he had to be in the mood. He returned to Hartford with his book still unfinished. Out of six hundred pages he tore up all but two hundred and eighty-eight. To Howells he wrote:

I took the 288 pages to Bliss and told him that was the very last line I should ever write on this book (a book which required 2,600 pages of MS. and I have written nearly 4000, first and last).

I am soary and (flighty) as a rocket to-day, with the unutterable joy of getting that Old Man of the Sea off my back, where he has been roosting more than a year and a half.

The *Tramp Abroad* finished Clemens was seized with an impulse to take up work again on a manuscript he had begun with great enthusiasm, and put aside, more than two years before. This was none other than the tale of *The Prince and the Pauper*, and after the drudgery of his book of travel the story of little Edward Tudor seemed to him like play. He wrote Howells that if he never sold a copy of the book his delight in writing it would be just the same.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

I take so much pleasure in my story that I am loath to hurry, not wanting to get it done. Did I ever tell you the plot of it? It begins at 9 A.M., January 27, 1547. . . .

My idea is to afford a realizing sense of the exceeding severity of the laws of that day by inflicting some of their penalties upon the king himself, and allowing him a chance to see the rest of them applied to others.

Mrs. Clemens, to whom he read his manuscript aloud at the end of each day, could not get enough of it. Their little girls were also eager listeners, and the story was finally dedicated "To those good-mannered and agreeable children, Susy and Clara Clemens." With the possible exception of the story of Joan of Arc, which he would write some fifteen years later, it is probable that Mark Twain never so thoroughly enjoyed any other literary performance. It came from the very best that was in him, and was precisely the kind of story that he would love, whether told by himself or by another.

Meantime the *Tramp Abroad* came from the press. Clemens sent Twichell a presentation copy with a long letter written on the fly-leaves, addressed: To my dear "Harris," such being the name under which Twichell appears in the book. In it he said:

Just imagine for a moment; I was collecting material in Europe during fourteen months for a book, and now that the thing is printed I find that you, who were with me only a month and a half of the fourteen, are in *actual* presence (not imaginary) in 440 of the 531 pages the book contains. . . . You have saved me an intolerable whole world of hated labor, and I'll not forget it, my boy.

The appendix to the *Tramp Abroad* contains some of the book's choicest humor. The essay on the

## "THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER"

"Awful German Language" is an example of Mark Twain at his very best.

Clemens was at this time doing a good deal of work for the *Atlantic Monthly*. Howells was still the editor, and kept at him for stories. "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning" was done at this period, a sketch full of broad humor contrived from absurd incident. Rose Terry Cooke wrote of it:

Horrid man, how did you know the way I behave in a thunder-storm? . . . Worst of it all is that you made me laugh at myself; my real terrors turned round and grimaced at me; they were sublime and you have made them ridiculous. . . . I really hate you, but you are funny.

In addition to his own work, he now conceived a plan for Orion. Clemens himself had been attempting, from time to time, an absolutely faithful autobiography, but had found it an impossible task. He confessed freely that he lacked the courage, even the ability, to lay his soul bare. He believed Orion could do it, and that if he would record in detail his long, weary struggle, with all his attempts and failures, his dreams and disappointments, it would make one of those priceless human documents such as have been left by Casanova and Rousseau.

Orion had long since returned from Nevada and taken up residence again in Keokuk. He had conducted a chicken farm and a variety of other enterprises, without success. He was, therefore, ripe for any new diversion, and the autobiography idea appealed to him. He set about it with enthusiasm, wrote a hundred pages or so of his childhood, set



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

down everything with startling frankness, and mailed the result to his brother for inspection.

The story was all that Mark Twain had hoped for—more, in fact. There was nothing too humiliating for Orion to confess, once he got started. Clemens forwarded the manuscript to Howells, suggesting that chapters of the confession be printed anonymously in the *Atlantic*. Howells was a realist, but he had his limitations. He strongly advised against publication.

Orion, meantime, was steaming along at the rate of from ten to twenty pages a day, forwarding them as fast as written, while his courage was good and the fires warm. His brother, receiving a package by every morning mail, presently lost interest, then developed a hunted feeling, becoming finally desperate. He wrote wildly to shut Orion off, urging him to let his manuscript accumulate and send it in one large consignment, when finished. Orion obeyed, and in this instance stuck to his work to the bitter, disheartening end. And it would have been all that Mark Twain had dreamed had his brother maintained the simple narrative of its early pages. But he drifted off into theological byways, lacking in human interest. A quantity of Orion's manuscript has been lost or destroyed. The remaining fragments of it show how faithful was his effort. It was never published, but it nevertheless brought a return. For it moved Samuel Clemens, who had always helped his brother at intervals, to make him now a steady allowance of seventy-five dollars per month, a comfortable income for those days.

## XLI

### LIFE AT QUARRY FARM—GENERAL GRANT

THAT year (1880), in Elmira, a third little girl arrived in the Clemens household—a large, fine child whom they named Jane Lampton, for her grandmother, but always called Jean. Her father, writing to his friend Twichell, spoke of her as the “comeliest and daintiest and perfectest little creature the continents and archipelagoes have seen since the Bay (Clara) and Susy were her size.” He adds that Jean now heads the list in the affections of the children, her mamma being second, followed by the two cats, with himself last.

Sometime ago it used to be nip and tuck between me and the cats, but after the cats “developed” I didn’t stand any more show.

Mark Twain had taken up work again, intermittently, at least, on the story of Huck Finn, begun four years earlier. His interest in it had again awakened, but it was not an enthusiastic one. Perhaps the fact that he was giving the finishing touches to *The Prince and the Pauper* at this time, a tale so different in character, would account for this. He worked pretty steadily, piling up manuscript, taking always a boyish pride in the number of pages he could complete at a sitting. When the day had

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

gone well he would count them triumphantly, then, lighting a fresh cigar, would come tripping down the long stair that led to the level of the farmhouse, and, assembling his audience on the veranda, would read aloud the result of his industry. It was a friendly audience, but critical. The author was not allowed to take too many liberties with his heroes and heroines. His auditors, small and large, were self-appointed censors to keep him straight.

The reference in the letter to Twichell, concerning the cats at the farm, introduces an important feature of that happy resort. There were always cats at the farm. From childhood to old age, Mark Twain loved cats, and his children inherited this passion. Little Susy once said:

"The difference between papa and mamma is, that mamma loves morals and papa loves cats."

Clemens cared little for dogs, though he was never unkind to them. Once at the farm a gentle hound named Bones even won his affection. Bones was always a welcome companion, and at the end of the summer, when Clemens, as was his habit, started down the drive ahead of the carriage, he found Bones halfway to the entrance, waiting for him. Stooping down, Mark Twain put his arms around the faithful animal and bade him an affectionate good-by.

He conceived enthusiasms for inanimate things, as well as for animals. At one time it was a new filing system, which was going to save the human race. At another time it was the newly invented fountain pen of which he was one of the earliest owners. He wrote to everybody about it, urging its

## LIFE AT QUARRY FARM

adoption, but later, when it acquired the habit of refusing to write, then suddenly deluging the paper, he pitched it out of the window and bought a stylographic pen, which he was sure would rescue the world from sin. He tried to get Howells to use it, and called ~~him~~ a "blamed old sodden-headed conservative" because he was not immediately converted. Howells, Doctor Brown, Twichell, and others were all presently struggling with the invention, trying to believe that salvation lay in its use. Howells flung his away, one day, in the midst of a letter to Clemens himself, with the words, "No white man ought to use a stylographic pen, anyhow." And a little later Clemens himself replied: "You see, I am trying a new pen. I stood the stylograph as long as I could. Then retired to the pencil. The thing I am trying now is that fountain pen which is advertised to employ and accommodate itself to any kind of pen."

Eighteen hundred and eighty was a presidential year. Mark Twain was for General Garfield and made a number of remarkable speeches in his favor. General Grant came to Hartford, in Garfield's behalf, and Clemens was selected to make the address of welcome. He began:

I am among those deputed to welcome you to the sincere and cordial hospitalities of Hartford, the city of the historic and revered Charter Oak, of which most of the town is built.

He pretended to be at a loss what to say next, and, leaning over, seemed to whisper to Grant. Then, as if he had been prompted by the great soldier, he

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

straightened up and poured out a fervent eulogy on Grant's achievements, adding in an aside, as he finished, "I nearly forgot that part of my speech," which evoked much laughter from the assembly and a grim smile from Grant. He then spoke of the general being now out of public employment, and told how England had rewarded the Duke of Wellington with his title and four million dollars in cash. He said:

If you had done and suffered for any other country what you have done and suffered for your own, you would have been affronted in the same sordid way. But, thank God, this vast and rich and mighty Republic is imbued to the core with a delicacy which will forever preserve her from so degrading you. . . .

Your country stands ready from this day forth to testify her measureless love and pride and gratitude toward you in every conceivable *inexpensive* way.

Grant's impressive smile showed itself more than once during the speech, and when the speaker reached the sentence that spoke of his country rewarding him inexpensively his composure broke up completely, while the spectators shouted their approval.

Mark Twain saw a good deal of General Grant during these years, and more than once urged him to write his memoirs for publication. Grant, however, was not yet ready for this venture. He had no faith in his literary ability, and he was too modest to tell his story for print.

## XLII

### MANY PROSPECTS—BACK TO THE RIVER

THERE was probably no period of Mark Twain's career that in later life he could look back upon with greater satisfaction than the one we have just recalled. He was forty-five years old, his work was highly successful, his income was large, he had a world-wide fame. If he could have been satisfied "to go softly," to live life easily, he would have saved himself much storm and stress through future years. The trouble lay in the old human desire to improve his fortunes. Restlessly he embarked in enterprises that dazzled, but led only to disappointment—even disaster.

Once he financed a steam generator which the inventor assured him would revolutionize manufacturing. He invested a considerable sum in the idea, and bade it a permanent good-bye. Following the steam generator came a steam pulley, which extracted thirty-two thousand dollars from his bank account in a period of sixteen months. Twenty-five thousand dollars was the price of a marine telegraph, and about an equal sum disappeared in a watch-company flotation. These are only a few of his experiments. To recount all of them would be monotonous. They had one striking family resemblance—none of them paid. At a time when he

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

felt that he had burnt his fingers sufficiently there happened along a young inventor named Alexander Graham Bell, offering stock in a contrivance for carrying the human voice on an electric wire. Clemens was polite but firm; he would have nothing to do with this new idea. Afterward he wrote:

I said I didn't want it at any price. He became eager; insisted that I take five hundred dollars' worth. He said he would sell as much as I wanted for five hundred dollars; offered to let me gather it up in my hands and measure it in a plug hat; said I could have a whole hatful for five hundred dollars. But I was a burnt child and I resisted all these temptations—resisted them easily. . . .

Next day he lent a large part of his free cash to a friend, who promptly failed; a little later he put the rest of it into an engraving process that cost him fifty thousand dollars before he was through with it. Once writing to his mother he said:

Life has come to be a very serious matter with me. I have a badgered, harassed feeling a good part of my time. It comes mainly from business responsibility and annoyances.

He had no moral right to be connected with business at all. He had a large perception of opportunity, but none whatever of details. He was the soul of honor, but in anything resembling practical direction he was a child. During any period of business venture he was generally in hot water: worried, impatient, alternately suspicious and over-trusting—rash, frenzied, and altogether upset. By a statement made on the 1st of January, 1882, we learn that his disbursements for the previous year were considerably more than a hundred thousand dollars.

# Report

for the week ending  
of the condition of the telephone  
at 351 Farmington Avenue  
Hartford, Conn

---

## Explanation of the Signs.

- + Artillery can be heard.
  - ++ Thunder can be heard.
  - +++ Artillery & thunder combined can be heard.
  - ++++ All combinations fail
- 

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.	A.M.
P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.

## Remarks:

MARK TWAIN ABOUT 1879 OR 1880 HAD ONE OF THE FIRST TELEPHONES TO BE PUT INTO A PRIVATE HOUSE. IT WAS NOT ALWAYS SATISFACTORY AND HE DESIGNED THE ABOVE CHART TO RECORD ITS SHORTCOMINGS



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

*The Prince and the Pauper*, published in 1881, came from the press of James R. Osgood of Boston. Bliss of the American Publishing Company of Hartford had died, and Mark Twain, who for some time had been dissatisfied with his royalty terms, had turned to Osgood, chiefly on the grounds of friendship. Osgood and Clemens were boon companions. They played billiards together and enjoyed each other's yarns. The new publisher was, in fact, too good a fellow to be a shrewd business man, and Clemens found no improvement, so far as profits were concerned. Nevertheless, he gave him another book, *The Stolen White Elephant*, and still another, a big book this time, the "Mississippi" chapters, written for the *Atlantic Monthly* so long ago, to be supplemented by a picture of the later Mississippi, which he now proposed to visit with Osgood as his companion.

The fulfillment of this plan was not delayed. They set out immediately for St. Louis, where they took passage on the steamer *Gold Dust*, down the river. Clemens intended to travel under an assumed name, but was promptly recognized at the Southern Hotel in St. Louis, and again on the boat.

They had gone on board at night, and Mark Twain was up bright and early, to see if he could discover any of the old landmarks. He looked out at the river, but all seemed strange to him. He made his way up to the pilot house. The man at the wheel, age about forty, seemed in no way familiar. Clemens engaged him in conversation, asking a few questions such as a landsman might ask. The pilot

## BACK TO THE RIVER

replied with a number of the ancient fictions usually furnished to landsmen; then, suddenly turning around, said:

"I want to get a cup of coffee. You hold her, will you, till I come back?" and before his visitor could say a word the pilot was outside and half down the steps. Clemens sprang instinctively to the wheel, as he would have done twenty years before. An instant later he realized that he was in charge of a big steamboat in the middle of the Mississippi River, without the slightest knowledge as to his locality. He thought the pilot must have gone crazy. He knew that no sane river man would trust his steamboat for a single moment in the hands of a greenhorn, unless he was standing at his side.

All at once he recognized where he was. The boat was in what is called the Grand Chain—a succession of hidden ledges, one of the most dangerous places on the river. They had to pass between two sunken rocks, only about seventy feet apart, where any variation meant disaster. Clemens no longer knew the exact locality of those rocks. He was about to drop dead when he heard a step on the stair, outside. The door opened and the pilot, leisurely entering, took the wheel, while his temporary assistant crawled weakly back to the seat. The pilot said:

"You thought you were playing a nice joke on me, didn't you? You thought I didn't know who you were? Why, I recognized that drawl of yours as soon as you opened your mouth."

Clemens said: "Who the hell are *you*? I don't remember you."

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

"Well, perhaps you don't. But I was a cub pilot on the river before the war, when you were a licensed pilot, and I couldn't get a license when I qualified for one, because the Pilots' Association was so strong at that time that they could keep new pilots out, if they wanted to, and the law was that I had to be examined by two licensed pilots, and for a good while I could not get anyone to make that examination. But one day you and another pilot offered to do it, and you put me through a good healthy examination and indorsed my application for a license. I had never seen you before, and I have never seen you since, until now, but I recognized you."

They got to be good friends and Mark Twain spent most of his waking time in the pilot house. Below Cairo the river was full and there was no danger of the boat hitting anything. All the marks had changed in twenty years, but "Sam" Clemens had not lost his steering skill and was usually at the wheel. When the two were not talking the pilot would lie down and sleep, leaving him there to dream that the years had not slipped away; that there had been no war, no mining days, no literary adventures; that he was still a pilot, happy and care free as he had been twenty years before. He had himself called regularly for the four-o'clock watch, in order not to miss the morning, and truly enough it seemed to him then that his life had not changed. Yet a great change had come, not only in himself and in the river, but in the human aspects of that great thoroughfare. It was no longer a highway of

## BACK TO THE RIVER

traffic. The railroads had killed steamboating—a craft of any sort was rarely seen.

He met Bixby at New Orleans. Bixby was captain now of a splendid new steamboat, the *City of Baton Rouge*, one of the Anchor Line steamers which marked about the end of Mississippi River steamboat building. Clemens made the up-river trip with Bixby, and these two in the pilot house found life wonderfully like the old days together, back in the '50's. To the writer of these chapters, many years later, Horace Bixby exhibited a precious letter which Mark Twain had written on his return to Hartford. In it he said:

Twenty years have not added a month to your age or taken a fraction from your loveliness. . . . I'd rather be a pilot than anything else I've ever done in my life. How do you run Plum Point?

Clemens continued his trip up the river from St. Louis, as far as St. Paul, stopping a day or two at Hannibal. To his wife he wrote:

That world which I knew in its blooming youth is old and bowed and melancholy now. Its soft cheeks are leathery and withered, the fire has gone out of its eyes, the spring from its step. It will be dust and ashes when I come again.

And in his notebook he wrote:

The romance of boating is gone now. In Hannibal the steamboat man is no longer a god.

## XLIII


### THE MISSISSIPPI BOOK—END OF

MARK TWAIN now took some steps toward becoming a publisher on his own account. He combined with Osgood on the Mississippi book and installed Charles L. Webster, his nephew by marriage, as subscription manager in New York City. Mention has already been made of Annie Moffett, daughter of Pamela Clemens, Mark Twain's only surviving sister. Soon after his marriage Clemens had established his mother and sister in a home in Dunkirk, New York, not far from Buffalo. Here young Webster had met and married Annie Moffett, and Clemens, finding the young man resourceful, had been glad to offer him a business opportunity. Webster had already looked after one or more of the unfortunate investments referred to in a previous chapter, but as these had been doomed from the beginning he had thus far made little display of his gifts.

Work on the Mississippi book dragged, and, as in the case of the *Tramp Abroad*, the author became almost desperate. He had vowed on that former occasion never again to limit himself as to time. But he had forgotten this pledge and was suffering accordingly. In October he wrote to Howells, then in Europe:

## THE MISSISSIPPI BOOK

The spur and burden of the contract are intolerable to me. I can endure the irritation of it no longer.

And as in November, when he had told Osgood and even  concerned that they must wait:

I have sufficient positiveness that I will finish the book at no particular date; that I will not hurry it; that I will not hurry myself; that I will take things easy and comfortably—write when I choose to write, leave it alone when I do so prefer.

Osgood wanted Mark Twain to lecture that fall, as preliminary advertising for the book, but was careful to make this proposition by mail; which was just as well, for if there was anything calculated to make the author violent at this particular time it was a proposition to go back to the platform. His answer to Osgood has not been preserved.

It was the middle of the following May (1883) that *Life on the Mississippi* was finally issued. It was a handsomely made book, for Osgood did everything with a lavish hand. Once in after years Clemens declared: "That book cost me fifty thousand dollars to make. Bliss could have built a whole library for that sum. But Osgood was a lovely fellow."

It was a successful book. Webster's New York agency was well conducted and would have returned a profit if the printing and engraving bills had been modified. In time it paid, and it remains today one of Mark Twain's most popular works. The first twenty chapters of it, originally printed in the *Atlantic*, present a picture of the river that will live as long as the English language. The remainder—

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

the story of the river revisited—is rather more journalistic, but is entertaining and finely descriptive. The book proved a great favorite abroad and has been translated into many languages.

That summer at Quarry Farm Mark Twain invented a "history game," something to give the children instruction and exercise combined with pleasure. In a letter to Twichell he wrote:

Day before yesterday, feeling not in condition for writing, I left the study, but I couldn't hold in—had to do something; so I spent eight hours in the sun with a yardstick, measuring off the reigns of the English Kings on the roads in these grounds, from William the Conqueror to 1883, calculating to invent an open-air game which shall fill the children's heads with dates without study. I give each king's reign one foot of space to the year and drive one stake in the ground to mark the beginning of each reign, and I make the children call the stake by the king's name. You can stand in the door and take a bird's-eye view of English monarchy from the Conqueror to Edward IV; then you can turn and follow the road up the hill to the study and beyond, with an opera-glass, and bird's-eye view the rest of it to 1883.

We do not know exactly how the game was played, but there was running in it and plenty of recreation. It was a typical Mark Twain idea, the kind of thing he was always inventing. But this time he went farther with his thought than usual and tried to make of it a game for indoors as well as for the field. It was to include not only the English kings, but those of every other nation, likewise the great statesmen, churchmen, celebrities in every line. He enlarged and enlarged, in his characteristic Sellers fashion; ordered Webster to take out patents; wrote Orion and set him to gathering facts and dates by the bushel; planned departments in

## THE MISSISSIPPI BOOK

every newspaper to be devoted to the problems of the game; blew the iridescent bubble bigger and bigger, until finally he blew it up. His plans had become so elaborate, so intricate, that nobody could understand them; nobody could play the game, even if it could ever be completed. In a kind of fury he dismissed the whole matter, and wrote to Howells:

I might have known it wouldn't be an easy job, or somebody would have invented a decent historical game long ago—a thing which nobody has done.

Yet the original idea was a good one—the game that extended along the driveway and up the hillside of Quarry Farm. The children enjoyed it and played it through long summer afternoons.

That proved to be an important literary summer, for it saw the end of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. His hard work on the Mississippi book found its reaction in fiction, with the river as a setting. When he suddenly got through with the history game he plunged into the story of Huck and finished it at a dead heat. To Howells, August 22d, he wrote:

I have written eight or nine hundred manuscript pages in such a brief time that I mustn't name the number of days; I shouldn't believe it myself, and of course couldn't expect you to.



## XLIV

### A PLAY WITH HOWELLS AND A READING ROOM WITH CABLE

HE seems to have been in no hurry to revise the story. Returning to Hartford, he invited Howells to come down and join with him in writing a new Sellers play for Raymond. The idea appealed to Howells and they entered into the work jubilantly. Speaking of it afterward, Howells said:

"Clemens took one scene, and I another. We had loads and loads of fun about it. We cracked our sides laughing over it as it went along. We thought it mighty good, and I think to this day that it was mighty good. We called the play 'Colonel Sellers.' We revived him. Clemens had a notion of Sellers leading a woman's temperance crusade."

The authors had a great opinion of their play, but unfortunately neither Raymond nor the managers agreed with them. Clemens eventually put it on the road with a well-known elocutionist, named Burbank, in the star part. But it was never a success and was not produced in New York. Raymond declared that the authors had made a lunatic out of Sellers, and a year or two later Howells agreed with him, though he always believed that the play had in it elements of success.

Clemens made some further attempts at dramatic

## A READING TOUR WITH CABLE

writing at this time, but without much result. Then, finding his finances somewhat reduced, he planned an elaborate reading tour as a recuperative measure. George W. Cable had come up from New Orleans and was giving public readings from his stories. Clemens conceived the idea of embarking with Cable, and perhaps Aldrich and Howells, in a grand tour of authors who would go swinging around the circuit in a private car, reaping a golden harvest. He offered to be general manager of the expedition and agreed to guarantee the others not less than seventy-five dollars a day apiece as their net return from the "circus," as he liked to call it. Howells and Aldrich amused themselves with the prospect, but only Cable was willing to realize it. The private-car feature was given up; Clemens made himself responsible for the profits of the expedition, paid J. B. Pond a commission as agent, and allowed Cable a salary of four hundred and fifty dollars a week and expenses.

The tour was a success, the readers being everywhere welcomed by full houses. They journeyed as far west as Chicago, giving readings en route, at Hannibal and Keokuk. Orion Clemens lived in Keokuk, also Mark Twain's mother, brisk and active for her eighty-one years. She had visited Hartford more than once, to enjoy "Sam's fine home," and she had resided for a considerable period with Pamela, at Dunkirk. But in the end she chose Keokuk as a residence. She attended the reading entertainment, and afterward, at home, when her children asked her if she could still dance (she had

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

been a famous dancer in her youth), she rose and, in spite of her years, tripped as lightly as a girl.

In the course of their wanderings, Clemens and Cable stopped at Morristown and spent the night with the famous cartoonist, Thomas Nast. They were to leave by an early train, and Mrs. Nast had agreed to see that they were up in time. When she woke next morning she thought the house seemed strangely silent; the servants were sleeping soundly. The alarm clock in the back hall had been stopped about the hour the guests retired, also the tall studio clock; every timepiece on the premises had retired from business. Mark Twain had found that they interfered with his getting to sleep and had quieted them, regardless of early trains and reading engagements. When charged with the deed he said:

"Well, those clocks were all overworked, anyway. They will feel much better for a night's rest."

A few days later Nast sent him a caricature drawing—a picture which showed Mark Twain getting rid of the offending clocks.

The readers took a fortnight's holiday at Christmas-time, and Clemens went home to Hartford. There a great surprise awaited him. Mrs. Clemens had made *The Prince and the Pauper* into a play, and Clara and Susy, with the children of the neighborhood, had rehearsed it for presentation. Karl Gerhardt, a young sculptor whom Clemens had educated, had painted a drop curtain and scenery. A stage had been set up in George Warner's home, a short distance away.

Clemens knew on his arrival that something



MARK TWAIN AND THE CLOCKS. BY TH: NAST)

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

mysterious was in progress, for certain rooms were forbidden him—rooms where the little actors were costuming. He had no inkling, however, of the real plan, and was led, protesting somewhat, across the grounds to the Warner home, and placed in a seat directly in front of the stage. ~~Even~~ Then he didn't know what the play was to be until the curtain rose and Susy came on as the little Prince, with Daisy Warner in the part of Tom Canty. Then he knew what it was all about, and was deeply moved and gratified.

The play was a great success and was repeated a few days later, with Clemens himself in the role of Miles Hendon. It proved the beginning of a series of dramatic performances that continued in that neighborhood for several years. The stage was generally set up in the Clemens drawing-room, and the children wrote plays for it themselves. They were natural actors and almost from babyhood had taken part in charades, always a favorite amusement in the Clemens home. Almost every Saturday was marked by some distinguished performance in which even little Jean had a part. They were usually "bloody" plays, full of executions. Jean as a court official sat at a small table and signed death warrants.

## XLV

MARK TWAIN, PUBLISHER TO U. S. GRANT

CLEMENS, returning from his reading tour with Cable, found himself a publisher in fact. Early in the year he had placed his manuscript of the Huck Finn Story in Webster's hands, to be issued by subscription, and in due time had made the young man his working partner, in a firm to be known as Charles L. Webster & Co., with offices at 658 Broadway. Through experience with the Mississippi book, Webster had acquired a practical knowledge of publishing, and made elaborate preparations for presenting Huck's story to the public.

Clemens himself took a lively interest in the details. From the pages of *Life* he selected an illustrator—E. W. Kemble, then young and unknown; he gave attention to the paper and binding, even to the method of canvassing for subscriptions. "Keep it diligently in mind," he wrote Webster, "that we don't issue till we have made a *big sale*." Furthermore, he urged him to get at his canvassing early and to drive it with all his might. Mark Twain, as somewhere remarked before, had clear business vision as to generalities, and this time there were no mistakes in his plan. He returned from the reading circuit to find that Webster had disposed of some fifty thousand books, with orders still piling up.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

It was a fine success and in every way deserved. Huck's story was hailed as a classic and will probably always rank as the best of Mark Twain's purely fictional writings. The tale of Huck and Nigger Jim drifting down a mighty river on a raft, cross-sectioning the various primitive aspects of human existence, is one of the most impressive examples of vagabond narrative in any language. Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote, "It is a book I have read four times and am quite ready to begin again to-morrow." Andrew Lang called it "the great American novel."

The success of the Huck Finn book was really only a step toward a publishing venture which quickly followed. One night (it was in November, 1884) Mark Twain learned that General Grant, who had met with financial disaster, had decided to write and publish his memoirs. Grant had undertaken some articles for the *Century Magazine*, and the matter of a book had been discussed. Clemens, in the habit of dropping in on General Grant to smoke a cigar with him, called next morning to find out just how far the book idea had developed. After a brief talk he realized that neither Grant nor the Century Company had any conception of the importance and commercial value of the work in hand. The publishers had had little or no experience with subscription books. They probably expected to sell ten thousand copies of it, at most, and proposed the usual royalty of 10 per cent. Mark Twain, with a keen perception of public sentiment, saw a fortune slipping away and promptly protested against it. He believed a book by Grant would sell

## MARK TWAIN, PUBLISHER

a quarter of a million copies, perhaps twice that number. He suggested that the general write to the American Publishing Company and get their proposition as to terms. Grant, however, demurred. The Century Company, he said had proposed a book, and, all things being equal, it should go to the man who had first suggested it to him. Clemens said:

"General, if that is so it belongs to *me*."

Grant did not understand until the other recalled to him how at an earlier time he had urged him to write his memoirs; had pleaded with him, in fact, agreeing to superintend the book's publication. He added:

"I am publishing my own book, and by the time yours is ready it is quite possible I shall have the best equipped subscription establishment in the country. If you will place your book with my firm—and I feel that I have at least an equal right to consideration—I will pay you twenty per cent. of the list price; or, if you prefer, I will give you seventy per cent. of the net returns, and I will pay all office expenses out of my thirty per cent."

To General Grant it seemed that here was a good friend offering to bankrupt himself out of pure philanthropy—something not to be permitted. He intimated that the president of the Century Company had been unwilling to guarantee him a profit of twenty-five thousand dollars on the book. Clemens said:

"General, I have my check book with me. I will draw you a check now, for twenty-five thousand dollars, for the first volume of your memoirs, and



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Certainly no campaign was ever conducted with a braver heart. As long as his fingers could hold a pencil he continued at his task. Once he asked if an estimate could now be made of what amount would accrue to his family from the publication. His publisher's prompt reply ~~that~~ already the amount of his share exceeded one hundred and fifty thousand dollars afforded him deep comfort. He was also assured that the country was not yet one-third canvassed. He made no further inquiry, and probably never again mentioned the subject to anyone. When Clemens left, General Grant was sitting fully dressed, with a shawl about his shoulders and pencil and paper beside him. It was a picture that would never fade from the memory.

In a note made July 23, 1885, at 10 A.M., on receipt of the news that General Grant was dead, Mark Twain wrote of that last parting:

I then believed he would live several months. He was still adding little perfecting details to his book, and a preface among other things. He was entirely through a few days later. Since then the lack of any strong interest to employ his mind has enabled the tedious weariness to kill him. I think his book kept him alive several months. He was a very great man and superlatively good.

Twichell wrote Clemens:

I'd give more to sit on a log with you in the woods this afternoon, while we twined a wreath together for Launcelot's grave, than to hear any conceivable eulogy of him pronounced by mortal lips.

Mark Twain's prophecy as to the sale of General Grant's *Memoirs* was more than fulfilled. Nearly

## MARK TWAIN, PUBLISHER

four hundred and fifty thousand dollars was paid to Mrs. Grant. The first check of two hundred thousand dollars, drawn February 27, 1886, remains the largest single royalty check in history.

Mark Twain, now fifty years old, was, as he believed, on the top wave of prosperity. His responsibilities were increased, his old days of peaceful living were gone, but a sense of eager triumph dominated him. The firm in which he was the chief partner was regarded as one of the foremost in America. Even on the liberal terms allowed General Grant they had netted a profit of more than one hundred thousand dollars on the *Memoirs*, while the sale of his own publications had considerably increased. With his natural optimism, it seemed to him that nothing could stem the tide of fortune. To a friend he said:

"I am frightened at the proportion of my prosperity. It seems to me that whatever I touch turns to gold."

Equally fortunate conditions prevailed in his home life. At Elmira the children, with their Langdon cousins, romped happily the summer through. Their "Aunt Sue" had built for them a little house, called by the story-book name of "Ellerslie," completely furnished, even to a small practical cooking stove.

Susy, who was thirteen—a romantic child with a literary turn—began about this time a "biography" of her father. It opened:

... We are a very happy family! We consist of papa, mamma, Jean, Clara, and me. It is papa I am writing about,

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

and I shall have no trouble in not knowing what to say about him, as he is a very striking character. Papa's appearance has been described many times, but very incorrectly; he has beautiful curly grey hair, not any too thick, or any too long, just right; a Roman nose, which greatly improves the beauty of his features, kind blue eyes, and a small mustache, he has a wonderfully shaped head, and profile, he has a very good figure in short he is an extraordinarily fine looking man. All his features are perfect, except that he hasn't extraordinary teeth. His complexion is very fair, and he doesn't wear [sic] a beard.

He is a very good man, and a very funny one; he has got a temper but we all of us have in this family. He is the loveliest man I ever saw, or ever hope to see, and oh so absent-minded!

That this is a fair picture of the Clemens household, and the truest of Mark Twain at fifty that has been preserved, cannot be doubted. Clemens himself in a letter to Orion's wife presents the peaceful quiet of that summer at Quarry Farm.

This is a superb Sunday. . . .

The city in the valley is purple with shade, as seen from up here at this study. The Cranes are reading and loafing in the canvas-curtain summer house, fifty yards away, on a higher (the highest) point; the cats are loafing over at Ellerslie, which is the children's estate and dwelling house in their own private grounds (by deed from Susy Crane), a hundred yards from the study, among the clover and young oaks and willows. Livy is down at the house, but I shall now go down and bring her up to the Cranes to help us occupy the lounges and hammocks, whence a great panorama of distant hills and valley and city is seeable. The children have gone on a lark through the neighboring hills and woods, Susy and Clara horseback and Jean driving a buggy, with the coachman for comrade and assistant at need. It is a perfect day indeed.

## XLVI

### CHARLES L. WEBSTER & CO., AND THE MACHINE

TO write in detail the story of Mark Twain's publishing venture would be to fill a volume—not without interest, certainly, but with slight appeal to the general reader. The business did not maintain its great headway. Clemens, full of schemes and enthusiasm, was very far from being a business man, and Webster, whatever his gifts, was at first a little carried off his feet by his success and inclined to venture rashly. There was a feeling that they had only to publish a book to insure its sale. Perhaps neither of the partners quite realized that in their recent great adventure it had been Grant's name, chiefly, that had insured the magic result. A book by General McClellan and another by General Sheridan were easy enough to obtain; also a *Life of Pope Leo XIII*, the last named to be published with the Holy Father's sanction and blessing. But the profits in these several instances were disappointing. Webster had even made a trip to Rome to interview the Pope, and the book, published simultaneously in six languages, was exploited in every conceivable fashion, yet the aggregate sales fell far short of the number which the agents had promised for their first orders. It paid, but it did not pay much. It was the same with a number of other books. Some did not pay at all.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Furthermore, the running expenses of the business were large. Webster had by this time established himself in fine quarters on East Fifteenth Street, with a ground-floor salesroom. Presently a book-keeper embezzled thirty thousand dollars, of which only a trifling sum was recovered. Then, what with the stress of business, Webster's health failed. He was unable to give full attention to important details, and at the end of about two years retired altogether, leaving its affairs in the hands of his assistant, Fred J. Hall, willing and capable, lacking only years and experience.

A Library of American Literature, edited by Edmund Clarence Stedman and Ellen Mackay Hutchinson, in ten volumes, was undertaken with great hopes, but it was a subscription venture and the monthly payments did not come in fast enough to provide for the cost of manufacture.

Mark Twain's personal finances during this period were subject to another heavy drain. With an inventor named Paige he had undertaken to manufacture a typesetting machine and was supplying several thousand dollars a month for this venture. Paige was as optimistic and impractical as Clemens himself, and perhaps not entirely trustworthy. Every month he promised that the machine would certainly be done in a little while, and every month there was some reason why its completion was postponed.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The episode of the typesetting machine has been told in full in *Mark Twain—A Biography* and can only be briefly summarized here.

## THE MACHINE

A time came when the machine seemed to be perfected, when it would set type with marvelous rapidity and accuracy, the only trouble being that it would not remain continuously in order. Even when it was behaving well enough, Paige would as likely as not ~~tear~~<sup>tear</sup> it to pieces to make some whimsical improvement. Once when Clemens had arranged with capitalists, who were to join in financing the enterprise, to come to Hartford and see the typesetter in action, Paige took a sudden notion to make one of his improvements, and the capitalists were told not to come. This was bad for their enthusiasm. It could not be warmed up again.

Literary work suffered during this period. Mark Twain had begun *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* two years earlier, and a manuscript was badly needed by his own company. He worked on it during the summer of 1888, at the farm, but returned with it to Hartford unfinished. He came back earlier than usual on account of the machine, leaving the family still in Elmira. He expected to have both the story and the typesetter finished that fall; then everything would be well again. The strain was really very hard; even the children were beginning to understand it. When one of the nurses one day spoke of buying some blacking for the children's shoes, little Jean said:

"Why, Marie, you mustn't ask for things now; the machine isn't done."

Lecture propositions were frequent enough at this period, but Clemens put them resolutely behind him. He made a trip to Boston to hear Bill Nye

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

and James Whitcomb Riley in their new combined entertainment, and Major Pond, who had conducted the Clemens-Cable expedition, prevailed upon him to introduce Nye and Riley to the Boston public. When he appeared on the stage the audience, recognizing him, rose in a body, waving their handkerchiefs and shouting. There was a great organ in the place and the organist turned on its full strength. The noise and excitement were tremendous; Mark Twain's hold on the public was at its height.

Pond proposed a regular tour with Nye and Riley, promising huge returns. Clemens, badly as he was beginning to need the money, put this temptation behind him. He was willing to lecture free, here and there, and once, when Col. Richard Malcolm Johnson had been billed to appear with Thomas Nelson Page in Baltimore, and Page, because of his wife's illness, was unable to come, Mark Twain went down in his place, helped to pack the house, and when the entertainment was ended pushed over to Johnson the entire receipts, saying, "That's yours, Colonel; I am not reading for money these days."

In the midst of these various matters Yale College conferred on Mark Twain the degree of Master of Arts. He was unable to attend the alumni dinner, but later in the year he made an address at Yale in which he said he had come down to institute certain college reforms. He said he had made inquiries and found that his degree gave him very broad and responsible powers, and that he had decided to drop the use of the Greek-written character in the college, because it was so hard to spell with, and so impossible

## THE MACHINE

to read after you got it spelled. He said that he had mentioned this to the Greek professor, and that he saw by what followed that nothing but early neglect had saved that professor from being a very profane man. He added that he had also given some healthy advice to the professor of mathematics, and the professor had acted in such a way that he had been obliged to take his number and report him. He had then made some suggestions to the astronomer of the university, who had been "gadding around after comets and other such odds and ends—tramps and derelicts of the skies."

I told him pretty plainly that we couldn't have that. I told him that it was no economy to go on piling up and piling up raw material in the way of new stars and comets and asteroids, that we couldn't ever have any use for till we have worked off the old stock. At bottom I don't really mind comets so much, but somehow I have always been down on asteroids. There is nothing mature about them. I wouldn't sit up nights the way that man does if I could get a basketful of them. He said it was the best line of goods he had; he said he could trade them to Rochester for comets, and trade the comets to Harvard for nebulae, and trade the nebulae to the Smithsonian for flint hatchets. I felt obliged to stop this thing on the spot; I said we couldn't have the university turned into an astronomical junk shop. And while I was at it I thought I might as well make the reform complete; the astronomer is extraordinarily mutinous, and so with your approval I will transfer him to the law department and put one of the law students in his place. A boy will be more biddable, more tractable, also cheaper. It is true he cannot be intrusted with important work at first, but he can comb the skies for nebulae till he gets his hand in. I have other changes in mind, but as they are in the nature of surprises I judge it politic to leave them unspecified at this time.

Clearly, Mark Twain's business distractions had not noticeably modified his sense of humor.



## XLVII

### KIPLING COMES TO <sup>e</sup>ELMIRA

ONE blazing day during the summer of 1889 a perspiring young man, in a hired hack, made his way up the long hill to Quarry Farm. He had come to see Mark Twain, he said, and was grieved to find that the great man was at General (Charlie) Langdon's. Mrs. Crane and Susy Clemens, the only ones at the farm that day, gave him a seat on the veranda and brought him cool water and a glass of the milk for which the farm has always been famous. The young man rested and talked to them of the far-away part of the world from which he had come. He said he was a correspondent for an East Indian journal, the *Pioneer*, and that he had come to Elmira especially to see Mark Twain. His talk was of India—wonderful talk that fascinated his hearers, especially Susy, to whom India was a fairyland, made up of magic, airy architecture, and mystery. He gave them his card, which bore the address, Allahabad, and a name, then strange to them, Rudyard Kipling. He gave it to Susy and wrote a compliment on it to her father. She stuck it in the mirror frame of her dressing table, as a treasure.

Kipling made his way back to town, hunted up Mark Twain, and the two had a talk together, of which Kipling has preserved an account in one of his

## KIPLING

American letters. After he had gone, Mrs. Langdon wanted to know who he was. Clemens said:

"He is a stranger to me, but he is a most remarkable man—and I am the other one. Between us we cover all knowledge; he knows all that can be known, and I know the rest."

About a year after Kipling's visit to Elmira, George Warner came into the Clemens library at Hartford with a small book in his hand. He asked Mark Twain if he had ever heard of Rudyard Kipling. Clemens said that he had not, and Warner assured him that he would hear of him very soon and that the noise he was going to make would be loud and continuous. The little book was the *Plain Tales*, and a day or two later he came with a copy of the *London World*, with a sketch of Kipling in it, mentioning his visit to the United States, and the fact that he had passed through Elmira. Susy promptly went to her room and brought the card from its place in the frame of her mirror and the Quarry Farm visitor stood identified. The reader should look up Kipling's account of his visit to Mark Twain.

In later years the two men became close friends, and once Kipling wrote to his publisher, Frank Doubleday:

I love to think of the great and godlike Clemens. He is the biggest man you have on your side of the water by a damn sight, and don't you forget it. Cervantes was a relation of his.

Of Kipling's talk, Mark Twain once said that it might be likened to footprints, so strong and definite was the impression which it left behind.

## XLVIII

PUBLISHING THE "YANKEE"—LEAVING HARTFORD

**T**HE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER was dramatized that fall by Abby Sage Richardson and was produced by Daniel Frohman, with little Elsie Leslie in the double role of the Prince and Tom Canty. Elsie often came to Hartford to play with the Clemens children and became a general favorite. The actor, William Gillette, was also at this time a frequent visitor. Clemens had advanced funds to pay for his dramatic education and Gillette was almost as one of the family. Like the others, he became fond of little Elsie, and one day he and Mark Twain decided to embroider for her a pair of slippers—a plan which they promptly carried out. It was not the most skillful embroidery, but the little girl prized the slippers beyond all her possessions.

"The Prince and the Pauper" play was never an entire success, due mainly to the dramatization, which required that the parts of Tom Canty and the little Prince be doubled, thus sacrificing certain of the strongest and loveliest scenes.

No Mark Twain book had appeared since *Huck Finn*, in 1884. Clemens finished the *Yankee* at last, and at the end of 1889 Webster & Co. published the book. It was profusely illustrated by

## LEAVING HARTFORD

Dan Beard, whom Clemens had selected on the strength of some pictures Beard had drawn for the *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Clemens liked the style of the drawings and their touch of symbolism. He could not have made a better choice for the work. Beard found the character of the Yankee, with his notions of progress and his fierce warfare against superstition and tyranny, exactly suited to his own taste. Not all of the pictures are commendable, but most of them are. Some of them are not only finely artistic, but powerful, as cartoons. The book appeared and made a good deal of a stir. Howells welcomed it as an echo of his own thought. To Clemens he wrote:

It's a mighty great book and it makes my heart burn with wrath. It seems that God didn't forget to put a soul in you. He shuts most literary men off with a brain, merely.

In after years he declared that "the Yankee, of all the fanciful schemes in fiction," pleased him most.

The American critics as a whole were favorable to the story in spite of the fact that it contained much of Mark Twain's worst writing—coarse and extravagant burlesque, which mars some of its finest scenes and antagonizes the reader often at the very moment when he is warm with righteous wrath against cruel custom and vicious laws. Much of this is due to the fact that Mrs. Clemens's health prevented her from reading the manuscript and giving it the benefit of her restraining influence and refinement of taste. As an example of Mark Twain

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

at his literary worst and best the *Yankee* ranks supreme.

The story has had no great popularity in America and still less in England, whose poetic legendry it turned into ridicule. The English papers as a whole condemned it; even Andrew Lang found little in it to praise. And yet, when all is said, it is a greatly imagined work. If it could have been—even could be, to-day—drastically edited it might rank among Mark Twain's highest achievements.

Clemens would seem to have intended to close his literary career with the *Yankee*. In a letter to Howells he referred to it as his "swan song," though perhaps this was not literally intended. He was only fifty-four years old, and certainly still had much to say. Moreover, there was going to be great need that he should say it. What with the typesetting machine and a business with increasing liabilities, he was finding it increasingly difficult to provide for the costly Hartford home. European residence began to be considered, and, with it, new literary plans.

The proposed change offered several advantages. Living abroad was much cheaper; the children were at an age to perfect themselves in the languages; both Mr. and Mrs. Clemens were troubled with rheumatism, and could be benefited by the European baths. A period of travel would be something of a boon to all of them.

As the months passed the reasons for going multiplied. Mark Twain's mother died in October, 1890, and Mrs. Clemens's mother a little more than a

## LEAVING HARTFORD

month later. The death of Charles L. Webster occurred the following spring; America had become a sad place. As a climax, the typesetting episode now apparently came to an end in complete failure. The capitalists who had promised support in the enterprise would have nothing to do with it. Clemens realized that for the present, at least, that dream was ended. The family securities were exhausted. He signed some further notes to keep his book business going, plunged into the writing of a new novel to be founded on the Sellers play which he had written with Howells, arranged with the New York *Sun* and the McClure syndicate for a series of European letters, and began to make preparations to close the beautiful Hartford home.

It was a sad breaking up. Most of the servants had been with them for a number of years, some of them since their beginning. The day came for departure and the carriage was at the door. Mrs. Clemens did not come immediately. She was looking into the room, bidding a kind of silent good-by to the home she had made and to all its memories. Then, following the others, she entered the carriage, and Patrick McAleer drove them together for the last time. They sailed the 6th of June, 1891.

## XLIX

### EUROPEAN WANDERINGS

THEY went to Paris for a brief time, then for a longer period to the baths of Aix, where both Mr. and Mrs. Clemens received benefit from the waters. Clemens wrote his first letter from Aix, describing that "paradise of rheumatics," as he called it. From Aix they journeyed to Bayreuth, where he wrote his second letter, one of the best descriptions of the Wagner musical festival ever put into words. Mark Twain had no great appreciation of classical music. He said

I feel strongly out of place here. Sometimes I feel like the one sane person in a community of the mad; sometimes I feel like the one blind man where all the others see, the one groping savage in the college of the learned, and always during service I feel like a heretic in heaven.

He tells how he really enjoyed two of the operas and rejoiced in supposing that he had developed a musical taste. But, alas! he was informed by experts that those particular operas were not real music at all. Then he says:

Well, I ought to have recognized the sign—the old sure sign that has never failed me in matters of art. Whenever I enjoy anything in art it means that it is mighty poor. The private knowledge of this fact has saved me from going to pieces with enthusiasm in front of many and many a chromo.

## EUROPEAN WANDERINGS

His third letter was from Marienbad in Bohemia, another "health factory," and in his fourth letter he tells how, to save expenses, he himself took charge of the family and its belongings during one of their several journeys. This letter, entitled "Playing Courier," is perhaps the most entertaining of the series. By the end of August they were in Nuremberg, which he calls the "city of exquisite glimpses," and a little later at Heidelberg, in their old apartment of thirteen years before, with its wonderful prospect of wood and hill and the far-lying valley of the Rhine. Then presently they were in Switzerland again, in Lausanne, on the borders of the beautiful Lake Leman.

He was getting into the spirit of writing, and considered doing a book of travel suggested by the *Century* editors, something in the style of *The Innocents Abroad*. As incidental to this he decided to make a floating trip down the Rhone in a flat-bottomed boat, with only his guide, Joseph Very, and the owner of the boat as his companions. He bought the boat outright for five dollars, and a few days later set out on this lovely, lazy journey. Certainly it was pleasant, in those limpid September days, to go swinging down that swift gray river, by ancient villages and purpling vineyards. He sent daily letters home, and for a while made voluminous notes, for prospective literature. Then the enjoyment became too great for effort, and, lulled into laziness, he put his notebook aside. Now and then there came a shower, and Joseph and the pilot rigged up an awning



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

over the stern of the boat, as protection against sun and rain.

One tranquil afternoon, floating drowsily along, about fifteen miles below the city of Valence, something very unusual happened. Observing the eastern horizon, Mark Twain noticed that in one place the distant blue mountain range presented a striking profile outline of a human face. Pointing to it, he said to the guide:

"Name it. Who is it?"

Joseph replied, "Napoleon."

The pilot also promptly agreed that the face was that of the great soldier.

They were abreast an ancient village at the time, a picturesque jumble of houses, their roofs all run together, and he decided to stop there for the night. They found a small inn, and from his window next morning he saw a marvelous sight—the sun rising behind the mountain range, and silhouetted against the morning sky the face discovered the previous afternoon, "Napoleon dreaming of universal empire."

He made a pencil sketch of the Napoleon head, adding that it was opposite Beauchastel, his intention being to tell the world of his discovery. But he made no use of his Rhone journey, and in later years his memory betrayed him. Then recalling the incident, he located the Napoleon a considerable distance farther down the river, not far from Arles. In that later day he even prepared (but did not publish) a brief article which he entitled, "The lost Napoleon," declaring that when it was rediscovered it would become one of the wonders of the world.

## EUROPEAN WANDERINGS

He even started a friend, Theodore Stanton, hunting for it, but without the correct directions, Stanton, of course, failed to find it.

It remained for the writer of these chapters, motoring up the Rhone on another September day, twenty-two years after Mark Twain's leisurely excursion, to rediscover the figure of the reclining Napoleon opposite the ancient village of Beauchastel. With Mark Twain's exact memoranda, which had passed into the writer's hands, the discovery was not a difficult matter.<sup>1</sup> The great stone face on the horizon is truly inspiring and beautiful, but it is visible only on a very clear day.

It required ten days to float to Arles; then the current gave out. Clemens presented his boat to the original owner, and returned to Lausanne by rail. In a letter he wrote:

It was twenty-eight miles (farther) to Marseilles, and somebody would have to row. That would not have been pleasure; it would have meant work for the sailor, and I do not like work, even when another person does it.

It had been a beautiful experience from beginning to end, but without literary result. He did, in fact, make an article of it, by and by, but it lacked both incident and humor. He never finished it and never regarded it as usable in its incomplete form.

---

<sup>1</sup> On Mark Twain's death the author of this book became one of his literary executors.

## L

### A WINTER AND SUMMER IN GERMANY

CLEMENS took the family to Berlin for the winter, and settled them, first in an apartment on Körnerstrasse, later at the Hotel Royal, Unter den Linden.

It was a gay winter. The Clemens family were welcome guests at all the diplomatic events—gatherings of distinguished men and women from every circle of achievement. Mark Twain was always a favorite in Germany. His books had been translated as they appeared; cheap editions now filled the shop windows. Everywhere on the street he was recognized and saluted. William Walter Phelps, then American minister to Berlin, made an especial effort to show attentions to his distinguished countryman.

Clemens was in pretty good health, for a time, though the old rheumatic pains in his arm still troubled him. Then one night he delivered a talk, in a crowded and hot lecture room, went to a ball later, and awoke next morning with a heavy cold. Pneumonia followed and kept him in bed the better part of a month. When he was nearing recovery the Emperor sent Frau von Versen, a Clemens relative who had married a German general, with an invitation to the palace. He was not well enough

## IN GERMANY

yet to attend, and a little later the Emperor requested her to prepare at her home a dinner for Mark Twain and himself, with a few special guests. When this invitation arrived little Jean Clemens, eleven years old, was awed. Reflecting on the matter, she said: —

“Why, papa, if it keeps on like this, pretty soon there won't be anybody for you to get acquainted with but God.”

Matters at the dinner went very well until a moment came when the German ruler made some remarks in praise of the American system of soldier pensions. Clemens had very positive views on this subject. He thought the system had been abused in the interest of politics, and said so. He forgot for the moment that court etiquette did not sanction any disagreement with the opinions of royalty, and noticed that his observations were making the company feel decidedly uncomfortable. He closed his remarks, and William refrained from speaking to him during the rest of the evening, except to say good night when the company broke up.

He did not see Emperor William again, though he received invitations both from the Empress Dowager and from the Empress herself, to the palace. Fourteen years later, a friend returning from a diplomatic mission to Germany brought a special complimentary message from the German ruler. It was:

“Convey to Mr. Clemens my kindest regards. Ask him if he remembers the dinner at von Versen's and ask him why he didn't do any more talking, at that dinner.”

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

It seemed an ambiguous message. Possibly it was intended to convey some sort of an imperial apology.

Clemens was still far from robust, and at the end of February his doctors ordered him to a warmer climate. Leaving the children in Berlin, he took Mrs. Clemens and Joseph Very and journeyed to the south of France. After a month at Mentone they crossed over into Italy and sent Joseph to Berlin for the others. They were all in Florence in April, and so attractive did they find it there that they engaged residence—the Villa Viviani near Settignano—on a hill to the east of Florence, with vineyard and olive grove sloping away to the city lying in a haze, a vision of beauty and peace.

They were not to have possession until autumn, and they returned to Germany for the baths of Nauheim. Here Clemens settled the family, then made a business trip to America, for matters there were becoming steadily more alarming. Mr. Hall, the young man in charge of the publishing business, was working desperately to keep things going, but times were hard and more money was constantly needed to provide for the manufacture of their big enterprise—the “Library of American Literature”—L.A.L., as they called it—which threatened to destroy them. The old machine enterprise, too, showed renewed signs of life, and the undestroyable Paige was holding out promises.

It was a fruitless journey. Clemens accomplished nothing further than that he wrote an article on shipboard entitled “All Sorts and Conditions of

## IN GERMANY

Ships," a fine piece of work, considering the trying circumstance under which it was written.

He worked steadily that summer in Nauheim, on *Tom Sawyer Abroad* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, the latter being the original form of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. In spite of business vexations the days must have passed pleasantly, for in an old letter there appears a reference to "that happy summer at Nauheim."

For one thing, the family health was improved and two eminent physicians had pronounced Mrs. Clemens, who had been troubled by heart irregularity, as free from any organic ills. The Twichells arrived from America, and Mark Twain and Twichell renewed their excursions together.

One day they ran over to Homburg, the great pleasure resort, and while there happened to meet on the promenade the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), with the British ambassador. Twichell and Clemens were presented; then presently the Prince took Mark Twain's arm and the two marched up and down, talking earnestly together, the Prince solid, erect, and soldierlike, Mark Twain weaving along in his curious, swinging gait, in a full tide of talk and brandishing a sun umbrella of the most scandalous description. This is Twichell's report of the meeting. Mark Twain himself, at a later period, recalled that the Prince reminded him humorously of a sketch which he, Clemens, had written some time before—"A Letter to the Queen of England."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Included in the Uniform Edition.

## LI

### BEGINNING "JOAN OF ARC"—THE MACHINE AGAIN

THE family was back at Florence, in the Villa Viviani, in September, and here it was that Mark Twain presently began a work for which he had been, consciously or unconsciously, preparing for nearly fifty years, the *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*. His interest in Joan's tragic story had never waned since the day, so long ago, when a stray wind had blown a leaf of it into his boyish consciousness. All his life the martyred girl had been his idol and he had meant some day to write of her. About 1880 he started collecting material and preparing himself for the work. Now, more than twelve years later, in the weather-stained old palace, looking down on Florence and across to the villa-dotted hills, he began one of the most beautiful stories ever written, the story of the Maid of Orléans. He thought of it as a companion piece to *The Prince and the Pauper*, and, remembering, or at least feeling that this story had missed a certain appreciation by being connected with his signature, he resolved to offer Joan anonymously. Walking the floor one day at Viviani, smoking vigorously, he said to Mrs. Clemens and Susy:

"I shall never be accepted seriously over my own signature. People always want to laugh over what

## BEGINNING "JOAN OF ARC"

I write, and are disappointed if they don't find a joke in it. This is a serious book; it means more to me than anything I have ever undertaken. I shall write it anonymously."

He wrote rapidly, once he got his plans perfected and his material arranged. The reading of his youth and manhood, with the vivid impressions of that earlier time, came back to him now as something which his own eyes had witnessed. Others of his family went down into the city almost daily, but he remained in that ancient garden, with Joan as his companion, the aged Sieur de Conte, pouring out that marvelous and tragic story. At the end of each day he would read to the family what he had written. Never had he worked so well and seldom as rapidly. At the end of six weeks he had finished a hundred thousand words, an astonishing performance, when one remembers that, after all, he was writing history, some of which he must dig laboriously from a foreign source. He had always more or less kept up his study of the French language, and it stood him now in good stead. The multitude of notes along the margin of his French authorities bear evidence to the magnitude of his toil. No previous work had ever required so much of him, none had ever so completely commanded his interest. Invited everywhere, he accepted sparingly, preferring to remain in the character of the old chronicler following again the banner of the Maid of Orléans, marshaling her twilight armies across his illumined page.

It was hard to have to stop in the midst of his



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

work and make another trip to America, but matters there were becoming steadily more alarming. A panic era was beginning, and the business of Charles L. Webster & Co. was in no condition to weather a storm. Even young Hall, a buoyant soul, was no longer optimistic. Clemens wrote him to sell a portion or all of the business, to do anything that would avoid increased liabilities. Such money as still came to Mrs. Clemens, with whatever of his own earnings as he could spare, were flung into the general fund. Clemens was fond of Hall; he realized how honest and resolute and industrious he had been. He went over now to see if something could not be realized either from the typesetter or from some other source that would ease the situation. He had a pleasant visit in New York, but accomplished nothing in a business way. It was no time to sell anything, and Paige, who had written glowing letters as to the machine's new prospects, had only fresh promises to offer. In his notebook Clemens wrote:

Paige shed even more tears than usual. What a talker he is! He could persuade a fish to come out and take a walk with him. When he is present I always believe him; I can't help it.

At another time:

Paige and I always meet on effusively affectionate terms, and yet he knows perfectly well that if I had him in a steel trap I would shut out all human succor and watch that trap till he died.

He met Howells in New York. They tried to cheer each other; yet it was somehow a sad reunion, for they were no longer young and when they

## BEGINNING "JOAN OF ARC"

called the roll of friends there were many vacancies. They had reached an age where some one they loved died every year. To Mrs. Crane, Clemens wrote of the unrealities of life:

I dreamed I was born and grew up and was a pilot on the Mississippi, and a miner and a journalist in Nevada, and a pilgrim in the *Quaker City*, and had a wife and children, and went to live in a villa at Florence—and this dream goes on and on and sometimes seems so real that I almost believe it is real. I wonder if it is?

He was back in Florence by the end of May, trying to work, but often spending a part of his nights walking the floor in the anguish of his uncertainties. In a letter to Hall he said: "I am terribly tired of business. I am by nature and disposition unfit for it, and I want to get out of it." This was the man who eight years before had made the Grant family rich and believed that whatever he touched turned to gold.

They closed Viviani and returned to the German baths, for Mrs. Clemens's health was not good. In spite of his distractions, Mark Twain was able to do some work, and his immortal "Defence of Harriet Shelley" belongs to this period. Toward the end of the summer he wrote to Hall:

Great Scott, but it's a long year—for you and me! I never knew the almanac to drag so. At least not since I was finishing that *other* machine.

He was referring to the work which Paige was now carrying on, with a Chicago man; curiously enough, another Webster.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

A few days later he wrote:

I strongly advise that every penny that comes in shall be applied to paying off debts. . . . We can pay a part of the debts owing to outsiders, none to the Clemenses. . . . What I am mainly hoping for is to save my book royalties. . . . If they go I am a beggar.

Then presently he could stand it no longer, and at the end of August (1893) sailed, the second time that year, for New York. Arriving there, he took a room at the Players—"A cheap room," he wrote, "at \$1.50 per day."

And now began for Mark Twain a remarkable period—one of black depressions and gay reactions—a turbulent half-year during which his fortunes were at a lower ebb than ever before; lower even than during those mining days among the bleak Esmeralda hills. Then he had no one but himself and was young. Now, at fifty-eight, precious lives depended upon him and he was menaced by a burden of debt. The liabilities of Charles L. Webster & Co. were fully two hundred thousand dollars. Something like sixty thousand dollars of this was money supplied by Mrs. Clemens, but the vast remaining sum was due to banks, to printers, to binders, and to dealers in various publishing materials. Somehow it must be paid. As to the assets, they consisted mainly of doubtful accounts, and some books which in that year of financial stress were none too salable. The typesetter, as heretofore, promised nothing.

## LII

### MR. ROGERS

**I**N this darkest hour there came into Mark Twain's life a man to whom in old age he would owe more than to any other of his myriad friends.

One night at the Murray Hill Hotel Dr. Clarence C. Rice said:

"Clemens, I want you to know my friend, Mr. H. H. Rogers; he is an admirer of your books."

Clemens turned to shake hands with a handsome, distinguished-looking man whose name was already familiar to him as one of America's great financiers.

"I was one of your early admirers," Mr. Rogers said. "I heard you lecture a long time ago on the Sandwich Islands. I have read everything of yours since that I could get hold of."

They sat down at a table, and Mark Twain told some stories that kept the financier in a gale of laughter. When at last they rose to go Clemens was urged to come up and make the acquaintance of Mrs. Rogers. Some weeks later he wrote Mrs. Clemens (by this time in Paris) that he had the "best and wisest man of the whole Standard Oil group" interested in his affairs.

The new friend, he said, was looking into the typesetter business and had promised assistance. Also he had urged him (Clemens) "to stop walking the

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

floor." This was glad news, and somewhat later he reported that Mr. Rogers had suggested to his son-in-law, William Evarts Benjamin, a publisher, to take over that white elephant, the Library of American Literature, for fifty thousand dollars—a sum which provided for the more insistent creditors.

Clemens did, in reality, give up walking the floor, and for a time at least found happier diversions. He was gorgeously entertained by the Lotos Club on the occasion of their removal into a new building; he attended dinners, amusements, suppers, balls, acquiring the appropriate title the "Belle of New York."

The shifting of his crushing burdens to stronger financial shoulders worked a change in him that was miraculous. In his letters home he described the festivities, the wildness with which he flung himself into them, dilating on his splendid renewal of health, has absolute immunity from fatigue.

His letters now were full of radiant optimism. Once more he had full faith in the type machine. He declared that their ship of fortune was in sight, and that, once anchored, he would give up business forever:

I shall say Farewell—a long farewell—to *business*! I will *never* touch it again!

I will live in literature, I will wallow in it, revel in it; I will swim in ink! *Joan of Arc*—but all this is premature; the anchor is not down yet.

Sometimes he could not wait to write, and sent cables. Such as: "Expect good news in ten days." "Look out for good news." "Nearing success."

## MR. ROGERS

Mrs. Clemens reported these messages to her sister in Elmira, adding: "They make me laugh, for they are so like my beloved 'Colonel,'" meaning, of course, "Sellers." When Paige, who had been as elusive as ever, was finally fixed by a new contract Clemens cabled his wife (it was the anniversary of their marriage):

Wedding news. Our ship is safe in port. I sail the moment Rogers can spare me.

With it all he was doing a good deal of literary work—articles and stories, one of which, "Traveling with a Reformer," grew out of a trip which he had made with Osgood to Chicago a long time before. When he now made a similar trip with Mr. Rogers, and the latter applied for passes, the president of the Pennsylvania Road replied:

"No, I won't give Mark Twain a pass over our road. I've been reading his 'Traveling with a Reformer,' in which he abuses our road. I wouldn't let him ride over it again, if I could help it. The only way I'll agree to let him go over it at all is in my private car. I have stocked it with everything he can possibly want, and have given orders that if there is anything else he wants the train is to be stopped until they can get it."

"Pudd'nhead Wilson" was running in the *Century* during this period, and "Tom Sawyer Abroad" in *St. Nicholas*. Mark Twain had seldom been more in the public eye.

### LIII

#### THE END OF BUSINESS, ALSO OF THE MACHINE—AND "JOAN"

**H**IS troubles were not ended—not by any means. In April, 1894, the affairs of Webster & Co. reached a stage where a considerable sum of money must be provided or the business brought to an abrupt end. Mr. Rogers was immediately notified, and, after sleeping upon the matter, advised an assignment for the benefit of the creditors. It was, in fact, useless to continue; the situation was hopeless. The end of the long struggle had come.

Clemens's chief regret was on his wife's account. He knew that to her the word failure would be associated with disgrace. She had pinched herself with a hundred economies to keep the business afloat. Mr. Rogers said:

"Assure her from me that there's not even a tinge of disgrace in making this assignment. By doing it you will relieve yourself of a fearful load of dread and in time you will be able to pay everything and stand clear before the world."

There was a meeting of the creditors, where Mark Twain was represented by Mr. Rogers, who firmly took matters in hand, assuring them that it was to the interest of all concerned to let the author retain his copyrights as a partial means of support

## THE END OF BUSINESS

while he earned the money to meet his debts. Settlement was to be made on a basis of fifty cents on the dollar, but both Clemens and his wife declared that sooner or later they would pay in full. Friends stepped in and offered to lend him money, but he accepted nothing. When the assets of the Webster firm were disposed of he still owed more than seventy thousand dollars. There were moments when he was deeply depressed. Once he said: "I need not dream of paying it. I never could manage it."

He returned presently to France—to Mrs. Clemens, who was deeply distressed by the Webster failure..

They went to a quiet watering place, and presently were settled in a little cottage at Etretat, where he renewed work on his long-neglected story of Joan. He continued it that winter in Paris, pleasantly settled in the studio home of the artist Pomroy, on the rue de l'Université, beyond the Seine.

He still had great hope in the typesetter. Paige in Chicago had at last completed a machine, and it had been set up for a test in the office of the *Times-Herald*. For a time it seemed to do well enough, and Mr. Rogers, who had backed it to the extent of some fifty thousand dollars, made favorable reports.

But then came the decree that meant the end of every prospect. The machine had failed to stand the test—the *Times-Herald* would have no more of it. Mr. Rogers withdrew from the venture and himself wrote a letter breaking the news to Mark Twain.

So it was that the great adventure which for nearly fifteen years had provided alternate hope and de-



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

spair came to its final end. Clemens put the matter out of his life forever—scarcely mentioned it again, even to members of his family. It was a dead issue. It was only a pity that it had ever seemed a live one. Mark Twain once received a letter from an author who had written a book calculated to assist inventors asking for his indorsement. He replied:

DEAR SIR:

I have, as you say, been interested in patents and patentees. If your book tells how to exterminate inventors send me nine editions. Send them by express.

Very truly yours,

S. L. CLEMENS.

The work on *Joan* now went wonderfully well. Relieved of outside pressure and distracting interests, he could bend his entire thought and energy to his great story. Once more, as at Viviani, he was reading daily chapters to the family circle. The tale was drawing to an end now. Tragedy was closing in on the frail martyr—the farce of her trial was wringing their hearts. Susy would say, "Wait, wait till I get a handkerchief!" and on the night when the final pages had been read she wrote in her diary:

"To-night *Joan of Arc* was burned at the stake."

Arrangement for both serial and book publication of *Joan* was made with Harper & Brothers, and it began anonymously in the magazine. The authorship, however, was immediately suspected, for the story had touches in it that could have been given only by Mark Twain.

## LIV

### TOURING AROUND THE WORLD

CLEMENS brought the family to America in May, and established them at Quarry Farm. Here he began preparing for one of the greatest platform ventures ever undertaken—nothing less than a lecture tour around the world, to restore his fallen fortunes. He arranged with Major J. B. Pond to act as his American agent, and with R. S. Smythe, of Australia, to continue the tour in that country and through the East. He decided to take Mrs. Clemens and one of the daughters along, and it fell to Clara to go. They left Elmira on the 14th of July, 1895. When the train drew away from the station they had a last glimpse of Susy, standing with the others under the electric light of the platform, waving them good-by.

They began the lectures at Cleveland, continuing westward, arriving at Vancouver a month later, after a succession of triumphs and with five thousand dollars surplus, which was forwarded to Mr. Rogers—an installment on a fund that was to wipe out the unpaid debts. Leaving Vancouver, Mark Twain gave a parting statement to the press. In it he said:

It has been reported that I sacrificed for the benefit of the creditors the property of the publishing firm whose financial backer I was, and that I am now lecturing for my own benefit.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

This is an error. I intend the lectures as well as the property for the creditors. The law recognizes no mortgage on a man's brain, and a merchant who has given up all he has may take advantage of the laws of insolvency and start free again for himself. But I am not a business man, and honor is a harder master than the law. It cannot compromise for less than one hundred cents on the dollar and its debts never outlaw.

He added that he believed he could pay off the last debt within four years, and at sixty-four make a fresh start in life.

They sailed the afternoon of August 23, 1895, arriving three weeks later at Sydney, Australia, in a pouring rain, the breaking up of a fierce drought. Clemens announced that he had brought Australia good fortune, and should expect something in return.

He was not disappointed. Nowhere in his own country had Mark Twain and his party been more generously received than he was in that far-away South Pacific continent. He was able to send back money to Mr. Rogers at the rate of about a thousand dollars a week, though he had hard luck, too, for he was laid up with sickness more than once during the long tour.

In *Following the Equator* Mark Twain has told us with great fullness and with sufficient faithfulness the story of his travels.<sup>1</sup> We are only permitted the barest outline here. From Australia they crossed to New Zealand, then back to Australia again. With the beginning of the year they reached Ceylon and passed over into India, that amazing world of gorgeous, swarming life and splendid pageantry. Every-

<sup>1</sup> A general résumé of Mark Twain's tour around the world will be found in *Mark Twain—A Biography*.

## TOURING AROUND THE WORLD

where they were received like royalty, overwhelmed with attentions and gifts; nowhere were the halls large enough to hold the lecture audiences. With the possible exception of General Grant's long trip in 1878 and 1879, there has hardly been a more splendid progress than Mark Twain's trip around the world.

They were about two months in India; then an English physician warned them to leave the country before the real heat set in. So they were off presently for South Africa, touching at Madras and again at Ceylon, also at the island of Mauritius, arriving at Durban in May. In South Africa Mark Twain found a special interest in visiting the prisoners captured from the Jameson raid, among them the well-known American, John Hays Hammond.

The Clemens party sailed from South Africa on the 14th of July, 1896, a year to a day since they had left Elmira, arriving at Southampton, England, on the 31st. Fourteen months before they had sailed from Southampton for America. Their circuit of the globe was complete.

## LV

### THE PASSING OF SUSY.

IT had been arranged that Susy and Jean Clemens, with Katie Leary, an old family retainer, should join them in England within the fortnight. The travelers proceeded immediately to London and engaged a house in Guildford, a modest place. They were still economizing, though Mark Twain had reason to believe that with the money already earned and the profits of the book he would write of his travels he could free himself from debt.

They had expected news in England, but nothing satisfactory had arrived. Mrs. Clemens was worried. An American steamer came in, but instead of Katie and the children it brought only a letter explaining that Susy was slightly ill, not seriously, but hardly well enough to sail.

Mrs. Clemens, now alarmed, cabled for later news. A ship was sailing from Southampton the next noon. Clara and her mother began packing, in case the reply was unfavorable. A second message arrived, saying, "Wait for cablegram in the morning."

This was far from reassuring. At Southampton they met a third message, which assured them that Susy's recovery would be long but certain. Mrs. Clemens and Clara immediately went aboard the

## THE PASSING OF SUSY

steamer and sailed for America. Clemens remained behind to prepare for their return. In a memorandum which he made many years later he said:

That was the fifteenth of August, 1896. Three days later, when my wife and Clara were about halfway across the ocean, I was standing in our dining room, thinking of nothing in particular, when a cablegram was put into my hand. It said, "Susy was peacefully released to-day."

Some of those who in later years wondered at Mark Twain's occasional attitude of pessimism and bitterness toward all creation, when his natural instinct lay all the other way, may find here some reason in his logic of gloom. Nearing the end of his fight against debt, with happiness once more apparently just ahead, he had been met by this. His life had contained other tragedies, but no other that equaled this one. This time no element was lacking—not the smallest detail. The dead girl had been his heart's pride; it was a year since he had seen her face; now he would never see it again. He was alone, absolutely alone, among strangers. In that day he could not even reach out to those upon the ocean, drawing hourly nearer to the heartbreak.

Mrs. Clemens and Clara, arriving in New York, were met by a tugboat, with Mr. Twichell and other friends of the family who had come down to break the sorrowful news. There was little need to say the words. Their presence there was enough.

Susy Clemens had died in the old Hartford home. She had been well for a time at Quarry Farm, but then her health seemed to decline. She worked continuously at her singing lessons, and overdid her

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

strength. Then she went on a visit to the Warners', in Hartford, but did not rest, working harder than ever at her singing. Finally she was told that she must consult a physician. A doctor came, prescribed some soothing remedies, and advised, for the sake of quiet, that she go over to her own home, a step away. Mrs. Crane and Charles Langdon came down from Elmira.

Susy did not improve, and her symptoms became alarming. A few days later the physician pronounced her ailment meningitis. Three days later, on the evening of Tuesday, August 18th, she died.

She had already been taken to Elmira when Mrs. Clemens and Clara arrived. They laid her beside the little brother who had died so long before, and ordered a headstone with some lines which they had found in Australia, written by Robert Richardson:

Warm summer sun, shine kindly here.

Warm southern wind, blow softly here.

Green sod above, lie light, lie light—

Good night, dear heart, good night, good night.

## LVI

### THE WINTER IN LONDON

MRS. CLEMENS brought Clara and Jean back to England. The house in Guilford was given up and the family took another—this time in Chelsea—No. 23 Tedworth Square. They withdrew from all social life and scarcely a dozen persons even knew their address.

Clemens found a measure of respite in his literary work. A notebook entry for October 24, 1896, says:

Wrote the first chapter of the book to-day—Around the World.

He worked pretty steadily, but his notebook entries reveal intermittent periods of fierce torture and self-reproach. Once he wrote:

I see now—as Livy always saw—that she had greatness in her, and that she herself was dimly conscious of it.

And now she is dead—and I can never tell her.

Work provided an increasing relief, and of course his natural turn for humorous expression found its customary vent, though it is noticeable that *Following the Equator* is more seriously written than his former books of travel. In a letter to Howells he refers to himself as a "mud image" with something in it which writes, "has comedy fancies and finds pleasure in phrasing them."



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

It is the law of our nature, of course, or it wouldn't happen; the thing in me forgets the presence of the "mud image," goes its own way, wholly unconscious of it and apparently of no kinship with it.

Once that winter a report got out that he was lying at the point of death. A representative of a New York paper ferreted out his address and appeared one day at Tedworth Square. He was a young man and naively exhibited his credentials. His orders read:

If Mark Twain very ill, five hundred words. If dead, send one thousand.

Clemens smiled grimly as he handed back the cable.

"You don't need as much as that," he said. "Just say that the report of my death has been grossly exaggerated"—a remark which flashed over the wire and was next day amusing the world.

In April Mark Twain spoke of his book as finished, but on May 18th (1897) he wrote in his notebook that he had "finished the book again—addition of 30,000 words." His long work completed, he went out rather more freely, and one evening allowed a friend to take him to the Savage Club. There happened to be a majority of the membership committee present, and on motion Mark Twain was elected an honorary life member, a distinction which had been conferred on but three others—two explorers, Stanley and Nansen, and on the Prince of Wales. When this was announced to Mark Twain he said:

"Well, it must make the Prince feel mighty fine."

## THE WINTER IN LONDON

They closed the Tedworth Square house and journeyed to Switzerland for the summer. At Weggis, a pretty village at the foot of the Rigi, on Lake Lucerne, they found accommodations in a neat and cheap *pension*, the Villa Bühlegg. Across the road on the lake front there was a bench under a large tree, where Clemens often went to rest and smoke. The tree to-day bears a small tablet, with the words, "Mark Twain Ruhe." Down the shore, in the cottage of some working people, he secured as a study a quiet upper room with the windows opening to the lake. He began a number of stories there, but perhaps he was tired, or not in the vein, for they were never completed.

On the anniversary of Susy's death Mrs. Clemens alone went aboard one of the small steamers which make the rounds of the lake, landed at a point that offered quiet invitation, and spent the day reading Susy's letters. It was evening when she returned, and her husband, lonely and anxious, was waiting for her at the landing. He had spent the day writing the beautiful poem "In Memoriam," a strain, lofty, tender, and dirgelike. It was published in *Harper's Magazine* and is included in his collected works.

## LVII

### MARK TWAIN PAYS HIS DEBTS

THEY went to Vienna for the winter, and their rooms at the Hôtel Métropole became a general meeting place of authors, journalists, diplomats, painters, scientists, men and women distinguished in every branch of literature, politics, and art. Mark Twain was the guest of honor at numerous banquets, and usually spoke—sometimes in English, sometimes in German, sometimes in an amusing combination of the two. A Vienna paper announced:

He has been fêted and dined from morn till eve. The homes of aristocracy are thrown open to him, counts and princes delight to do him honor, and foreign audiences hang upon the words that fall from his lips, ready to burst out any instant into roars of laughter.

In the midst of these new gayeties came the news of the death of Orion Clemens. Orion had died as he had lived—the dreamer, always with a new plan. He had seated himself one morning with pencil and paper to set down the details of his latest project, when death came to him kindly enough in this moment of new hope. He was seventy years old at the time.

It was during this winter that Mark Twain discharged his great burden of debt. *Following the Equator* had come from the press in November, and

## MARK TWAIN PAYS HIS DEBTS

had been well received. With the accumulation of royalty and the profits from his long lecture tour he was prepared to stand once more a free man before the world.

In November, 1897, he wrote to Mr. Rogers:

Let us begin on those debts. I cannot bear the weight any longer. It totally unfits me for work.

The beginning was made, and at the end of December he wrote again:

Land! we are glad to see those debts diminishing. For the first time in my life I am getting more pleasure from paying money out than pulling it in.

A month later enough money had accumulated to make the final payments to the creditors.

On the eve of sailing for Australia he had allowed four years in which to clear himself of his burdens; in less than two and a half years he had achieved that result, with some thousands of dollars still on hand.

Clemens had kept his financial progress a secret, but the payment of his debts was a public matter and was made the most of by the press. Headlines shouted it everywhere, and long editorials told the story. The failure of the typesetter, the collapse of the publishing firm, the trip around the world, the tragedy of Susy's death—these things were all reviewed, and his final triumph glorified.

It has been asserted, by those in a position to know least about the matter that Henry Rogers lent, even gave, Mark Twain large sums, and

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

pointed out opportunities whereby he could make heavily by speculation. No such statement is true. Mr. Rogers neither lent nor gave Mark Twain money, and he never allowed him to speculate when he could prevent it. 'He sometimes invested for him, but he never bought for him a share of stock that he did not have the money in hand to pay for in full—money belonging to, and earned by, Clemens himself.

What he did give to Mark Twain was his priceless counsel and time—gifts more precious than any mere sum of money—boons that Mark Twain could accept without humiliation. He did accept them, and was unceasingly grateful.

Not that he was always heedful of the advice. He was scarcely out of debt when he began negotiations with the great Austrian inventor, Szczepanik, for the American rights in a wonderful carpet-pattern machine, and, Sellers-like, was planning to organize a company with a capital of fifteen hundred million dollars to control the carpet-weaving industries of the world. He had the wisdom to write to Mr. Rogers about the great scheme, inviting the Standard Oil Company to furnish the capital for it. It appears not to have borne the test of the financier's scrutiny, and was presently heard of no more.

## LVIII

### SOCIAL VIENNA, AND HOME

CLEMENS, no longer worried about finances, now gave himself up to literary work, lecturing, and social diversions.

"I have abundant peace of mind again," he wrote Howells. "No sense of burden. Work has become a pleasure—it is not labor any longer."

He was now the lion of the Austrian capital. Introductions to him were sought by persons of the most exclusive rank. In a way, it was the winter in London of twenty-five years before over again. Only, Mark Twain was not the same. Then he had been unsophisticated, new, not always at his ease. Now he was the polished familiar of courts and embassies. Any afternoon, in his apartment at the Métropole, might be seen such famous ones as Verestchagin, Leschetizky, Dvorák, Lenbach, and Jokai, with diplomats and princes of many nations. The Queen of Rumania, Carmen Sylva, a poetess in her own right, was a devoted admirer and friend. Once, on the occasion of introducing a protégé, she wrote him:

I beg your pardon for being a bore to one I so deeply love and admire, to whom I owe days and days of forgetfulness of self and troubles, and the intensest of all joys—hero worship! People don't always realize what a happiness that is! God

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

bless you for every beautiful thought you poured into my tired heart, and for every smile on a weary way.

CARMEN SYLVA.

Among the articles which Mark Twain wrote in Vienna was the one on the outbreak in the Austrian Reichsrath, an episode which in part he witnessed; another was "Concerning the Jews," one of the finest existing essays on Hebrew character.

But a story he wrote at this period will live when those others are but little remembered. It is the story of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg"—a tale that in its own way takes its place with the half-dozen great English short stories of the world. Probably no one but Mark Twain ever conceived the idea of demoralizing a whole community—of making its "nineteen leading citizens" ridiculous by leading them into a cheap glittering temptation, and then having them expose themselves in the very sanctity of their own church. That it is Mark Twain's greatest short story there can be no question.

Clemens took the family to a little near-by resort, Kaltenleutgeben, for the summer, returning to Vienna, this time to the new Krantz Hotel, where they passed another brilliant and busy winter, their drawing-room acquiring the name of the "Second Embassy." With all his diversions, he managed to do a great deal of work, among other things developing a fanciful scheme—always a favorite of his—the appearance among human beings of a creature from another realm. "The Mysterious Stranger," begun in at least three forms, contains much of his best and

## SOCIAL VIENNA

most earnest writing. The version published after his death was the one completed (or nearly completed) at Vienna.<sup>1</sup>

There is not room here to recite the brilliant social events of that winter. Clemens made speeches and gave readings in the aid of any good cause, and once went as far as Budapest, to read for charity.

That Mark Twain found gratification in his successes we need not doubt. But the tragedy of Susy's death was never long forgotten. In a letter to Howells he wrote:

All these things might move and interest one. But how desperately more I have been moved to-night by the thought of a little old copy in the nursery of "At the Back of the North Wind." Oh, what happy days they were when that book was read, and how Susy loved it!

With the coming of spring, 1899, they left Vienna, followed to the station by a great crowd, who loaded their compartment with flowers and lingered on the platform, waving and cheering while the train pulled away. They spent several weeks in London, crossed over to Sweden in July, returning to London in October, where they took up residence in a small apartment, No. 30 Wellington Court. The Boer War was going on that winter, a "sordid and criminal war," Mark Twain called it, in which England was "in the wrong, but must be upheld." To Twichell he wrote:

I talk the war with both sides—always waiting until the other man introduces the topic. Then I say, "My head is with the

---

<sup>1</sup> The brief and striking ending of this manuscript did not come to light until some little time after Mark Twain's death.



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

British, but my heart and such rags of morals as I have are with the Boer—now we will talk, unembarrassed and without prejudice.” And so we discuss and have no trouble.

I notice that God is on both sides in this war; thus history repeats itself. But I am the only person who has noticed this; everybody here thinks He is playing the game for this side, and for this side only.

With the summer of 1900 they removed to a beautiful old place just out of London, Dollis Hill House, then still a rural spot with wide spaces of grass, spreading oaks, and grazing sheep. At an earlier period Gladstone, a friend of the owner, had made it a favorite retreat.

“Dollis Hill comes nearer to being a paradise than any other home I ever occupied,” Clemens wrote when the summer was about ended, and Mrs. Clemens declared that she would like to remain there forever.

The closing of Dollis Hill marked the end of their European residence. Mark Twain, free from debt, ready once more to face old friends, was eager for his native land. They sailed for America October 6, 1900, bidding, as they hoped, a permanent good-bye to foreign travel. They reached New York on the 15th, triumphantly welcomed after their long nine years of wandering.

## LIX

### A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY

**I**T would be hard to exaggerate the stir which the newspapers and the public generally made over the homecoming of Mark Twain. He had met with misfortune and tragedy; he had received honors abroad, such as never perhaps before had been conferred on a private citizen; single-handed he had made his fight with debt, and won. Every newspaper printed again the story of his triumph:

"He had behaved like Walter Scott," says Howells, "as millions rejoiced to know who had not known how Walter Scott had behaved till they knew it was like Clemens."

He found a house at 14 West Tenth Street, a furnished house, obscure enough heretofore, but conspicuous now. All day long reporters were running there; committees arrived to offer him entertainments; editors came asking for contributions; lecture agents came with fabulous offers for him to appear for any number of nights he chose. He accepted more entertainment than was good for him, for everywhere he was obliged to speak and the drain on him told. "His friends saw that he was wearing himself out," writes Howells, and certain it is that he grew thin and pale and had a hacking cough.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

In the various utterances of this time Mark Twain's hearers recognized his more serious purpose. He still made them laugh, but he also made them think and stirred them to a truer gospel of patriotism.

He denounced the nations who had interfered in China and declared himself a "Boxer," under prevailing conditions. Toward the end of the winter he was asked to preside at a Lincoln Birthday celebration at Carnegie Hall, where he must introduce Col. Henry Watterson as the speaker of the evening.

"Think of it," he wrote Twichell, "two old rebels functioning there: I as president and Watterson as orator of the day. Things have changed somewhat in these forty years, thank God!"

The Watterson introduction proved one of Mark Twain's choice speeches.

Mark Twain was likely to be critical of the doings and shortcomings of mankind, including his own. He knew that he had all the weaknesses of the race; and he never spared himself when condemning the species. The "damned human race" was a favorite characterization, and recurred oftenest when he had done some particularly humiliating thing. If he set himself up as a reformer, it was never without a full appreciation of his own weaknesses.

"The damned human race" was behaving very badly about the end of the year 1900. In New York City unspeakable corruption was rampant; the Boers were being oppressed in South Africa; the natives were being murdered in the Philippines; Leopold of Belgium was massacring and mutilating

## A PROPHET AT HOME

the blacks in the Congo, and the allied powers in the cause of Christ were slaughtering Chinese. On New Year's Eve he wrote:

### A GREETING FROM THE NINETEENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I bring you the stately nation named Christendom, returning, bedraggled, besmirched, and dishonored, from pirate raids in Kiao-Chou, Manchuria, South Africa, and the Philippines, with her soul full of meanness, her pocket full of boodle, and her mouth full of pious hypocrisies. Give her soap and a towel, but hide the looking-glass.

This was a sort of preliminary. Then, restraining himself no longer, he unburdened himself fully in an article for the *North American Review* entitled, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." It was time that some one spoke the right word, and he was about the only one who could do it and be certain of universal audience. He took as his text some Christmas Eve clippings from the New York dailies. One of these declared that Christmas dawned in the United States "over a people full of hope and aspiration and good cheer," adding that such a condition insured contentment and happiness. Another of the clippings told of the "terrible offenses against humanity, committed in the name of politics, in some of the most notorious East Side districts," declaring that "they could not be pictured even verbally." Another clipping told of the situation in China, where indemnities for Boxer damages were collected at the rate of three hundred taels for each murder; also life for life, that is to say—"head for head"—

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

adding that in one district six hundred and eighty heads had been so collected.

The missionary idea had seldom appealed to Mark Twain, and, coupled with this business of bloodshed, it was less attractive than usual. He printed the clippings in full, one following the other; then he said:

By happy luck we get all these glad tidings on Christmas Eve—just the time to enable us to celebrate the day with proper gayety and enthusiasm. Our spirits soar and we find we can even make jokes: tails I win, heads you lose.

He compared the missionary policy in China to that of the Pawnee Indians. He denounced the national policies in Africa, China, and the Philippines, showed by the reports, and by private letters of soldiers sent home, how cruel and barbarous and fiendish had been the warfare made by those whose avowed purpose was to carry the blessed light of civilization and gospel to the benighted native. Mark Twain never wrote anything more scorching, more penetrating in its sarcasm, more fearful in its revelation of injustice and hypocrisy, than this article "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." He even doubted the wisdom of printing it. Howells, however, advised its publication and thought it should be illustrated by Dan Beard, adding, "with such pictures as he made for the *Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, but you'd better hang yourself afterward."

Pictures were not required. It was published in the *North American Review* for February, 1901, as

## A PROPHET AT HOME

the opening article; after which the cyclone. Every paper in England and America printed editorials, with bitter denunciation or eager praise, according to their lights and convictions. At 14 West Tenth Street letters, newspaper clippings, documents poured in by the bushel—laudations, vituperations, vindications; no such tumult ever occurred in a peaceful literary home. Cartoons of him appeared. Rogers, in *Harper's Weekly*, pictured him as Tom Sawyer, assailed by a shower of snowballs, "having the time of his life." Another artist, Fred Lewis, presented him as Huck Finn with a gun.

Clemens did a second article entitled, "To My Missionary Critics," and the storm raged on. It took a long time for it to die, and for as much as a year afterward letters kept arriving filled with either praise or blame. Andrew Carnegie was one of those who highly approved. He wrote:

There is a new Gospel of St. Mark in the *North American* which I like better than anything I've read for many a day. . . . I count among my privileges in life that I know you, the author.

Not all ministers were against him. The associate pastor of the Everyday Church in Boston wrote:

I want to thank you for your matchless article in the current *North American*. It must make converts of well-nigh all who read it.

## LX

### "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

IN June Clemens took the family to Saranac Lake, where they occupied a big log cabin, "The Lair," built in a remote and beautiful spot at the water's edge. They did not return to 14 West Tenth Street, but after a week at Elmira took up residence at Riverdale-on-the-Hudson, in the old Appleton home. All through their early European residence Mrs. Clemens had looked forward to living again in the Hartford home, but then Susy died and she never afterward felt that she could enter the familiar rooms. There were many pleasant neighbors at Riverdale, and it was near enough to New York to be easily accessible to old friends.

Clemens took an interest in New York City politics that fall and made a speech indicting for "high crimes and misdemeanors" the Tammany chief, Richard Croker. When the election was over and Seth Low, whom he had supported, was elected he received a share of the credit. One paper celebrated him in verse:

Who killed Croker?  
"I," said Mark Twain,  
"I killed Croker,  
I, the jolly joker!"

He had many activities at this time, capitalizing patents here and there, as in the old days, for he had

## "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

plenty of money again, now, and he liked to find dazzlingly new ways for investing it.

He was also writing pretty steadily these days. The human race was furnishing him with ever so



MARK TWAIN CARICATURED AS CHARGING TAMMANY

many inspiring subjects, and he found time to pour out his indignation, generally with no expectation of putting the result into print. He once told Howells, with the wild joy of his boyish heart, how Mrs. Clemens found some compensation, when kept to her room by illness, in the reflection that now she



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

would not hear so much about the "damned human race."

One wonders how he found time to do all the things that he did. His energy was so great, his vitality so inexhaustible, he must find relief somehow. He ranged through every subject from protoplasm to infinity, exulting, condemning, ridiculing, explaining; his brain was always busy—a dynamo that rested neither night nor day. On a yachting trip with Mr. Rogers he argued politics a good deal with "Tom" Reed, who, with all his training and practical knowledge of the subject, confessed himself outdone.

"Do you believe the things you say?" he asked at last, in his thin, falsetto voice.

"Yes," said Clemens, "some of them."

"Well, you want to look out; if you go on this way, by and by you'll get to believing nearly *everything* you say."

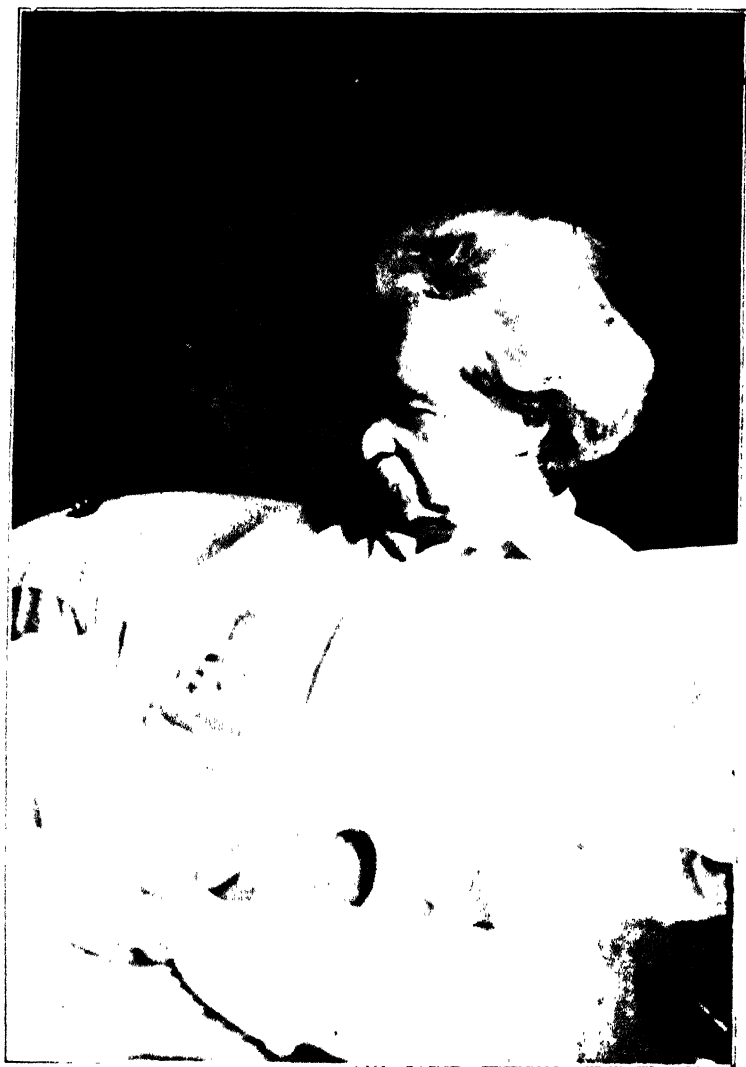
At the end of May, 1902, Mark Twain was summoned by his native state to receive the degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Missouri. He went first to St. Louis, and was met at the train there by his old river instructor, Horace Bixby, as fresh, wiry, and capable as he had been forty-five years before. Clemens said:

"I have become an old man. You are still thirty-five."

They went over to the Planters' Hotel and were given an impromptu reception in the lobby, and another at the rooms of the Pilots' Association; then Clemens took the train for Hannibal, where he spent five busy days. He was invited to attend the high-



THE LAST SUMMER AT THE FARM



MARK TWAIN AT WORK, 1906

## "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

school commencement and asked to distribute the diplomas. He undertook the work in his own way. Gathering up an armful of them, he said to the graduates:

"Take one. Pick out a good one. Don't take two, but be sure you get a good one."

Next morning he visited the old home on Hill Street, and stood in the doorway, all dressed in white, while a battalion of picture-takers photographed him on the threshold of his youth.

"It all seems so small to me," he said, as he looked through the house. "A boy's home is a big place to him. I suppose if I should come back again ten years from now it would be the size of a bird house."

Of his own old companions but few remained. John Briggs, who as Joe Harper had found immortality in *Tom Sawyer*, was there; also John Robards, who long ago had worn golden curls and a medal for good conduct. But "Huck" Blankenship was somewhere in the more distant West, and had so far amended his habits that he had become a justice of the peace.

They put Mark Twain into a carriage and drove him far and wide—to the cave, to Lover's Leap, where he had gathered flowers with Laura Hawkins—still living, a widow with silver hair. The next morning was Sunday and Col. John Robards escorted him to the various churches and Sunday schools. They were all new churches to Samuel Clemens, but he pretended not to recognize this fact. In each one he was asked to say a few words, and began each time by telling how pleased he was

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

to be back in the old Sunday school again, and to the delight and amusement of his hearers would point out the very place where he sat.

That Sunday afternoon, with John Briggs, he walked over Holliday's Hill—the "Cardiff Hill" of *Tom Sawyer*. They calculated that nearly three thousand Sundays had passed since they had played there together, and now here they were once more—their hair white, but the hills still fresh and green, the river still sweeping by and rippling in the sun. Looking across to the low-lying Illinois shore, and to the green islands where they had played, and to Lover's Leap on the south, the man who had been Sam Clemens said:

"John, that is one of the loveliest sights I ever saw. Down there by the island is the place we used to swim, and yonder is where a man was drowned, and over there is where the steamboat sank. Down there on Lover's Leap is where the Millers put on their robes one night to go to heaven. None of them went that night, but I suppose most of them have gone now."

And so they talked on, of this thing and that, touching lovingly and lingeringly that most beautiful of all our possessions—the only one we are sure of—the past.

"Sam," said John, when they parted, "this is probably the last time we shall meet on this earth. God bless you. Perhaps somewhere we shall renew our friendship."

"John," was the answer, "this day has been worth thousands to me. We were like brothers once, and I

## "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

feel that we are the same now. Good-by, John. I'll try to meet you—somewhere."

Clemens left next day for Columbia, where the university is located. At each place where the train stopped crowds were waiting to cheer and wave, and to offer him flowers. Sometimes he spoke a few words, but oftener, his eyes filled with tears, his voice refused to come.

There is something essentially dramatic in official recognition by one's native state—the return of the lad who has set out unknown to battle with life, and who, having conquered, is invited back to be crowned. No other honor, however great and spectacular, is quite the same, for there is in it a pathos and a completeness that are elemental and stir emotions as old as life itself.

It was on the 4th of June, 1902, that Mark Twain received his degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Missouri. The ceremony was a peculiarly impressive one. Several degrees were conferred—Mark Twain's honor coming last. Gardner Lathrop read a brief statement, introducing him as "America's foremost author and best-loved citizen."

Clemens stepped to the center of the stage and paused. He seemed to be in doubt as to whether he should make a speech or simply express his thanks and retire. Suddenly, without a signal, the great audience rose as one man and stood in silence at his feet. He bowed, but he could not speak. Then that vast assembly began a peculiar chant, spelling out the word "M-i-s-s-o-u-r-i," a pause between each letter. It was tremendously impressive. He had recovered

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

himself by the time the chant ended, and when they demanded, as they did immediately, a speech he made them one—the kind of speech he could make better than anyone living, full of quaint phrasing, happy humor, gentle and dramatic pathos.

Returning to St. Louis, Samuel Clémens was invited to attend the rechristening of the harbor boat. It had been named the *St. Louis*; it was now to be the *Mark Twain*. A short trip was made on it by the christening party, which included Governor Francis, the Count and Countess Rochambeau, and Marquis de Lafayette, who had come over for the dedication of the World's Fair ground. Mark Twain himself was invited to take the wheel, and the others collected in the pilot house behind him, feeling that it was a memorable occasion. Presently he saw a little ripple running out from the shore across the bow. In the old days he could have told whether it indicated a bar there or was only caused by the wind. Now he was not sure. Turning to the pilot languidly, he said:

"I feel a little tired; I guess you better take the wheel."

Luncheon was served aboard. Mayor Wells made a christening speech and the Countess Rochambeau smashed a bottle of champagne on the deck, saying:

"I christen thee, good boat, *Mark Twain*."

So it was that the great river, in this their last meeting, joined in according him honors.

## LXI

### YORK HARBOR AND RIVERDALE

THEY engaged for the summer a cottage at York Harbor, Maine, and about the end of June Mr. Rogers brought his yacht to Riverdale and took them to Maine by sea. Howells was at Kittery Point, not far away; everything promised a happy summer. To her sister Mrs. Clemens wrote:

We are in the midst of pines. They come right up about us and the house is so high and the roots of the trees are so far below the veranda that we are right in the branches. We drove over to call on Mr. and Mrs. Howells. The drive was most beautiful, and never in my life have I seen such a variety of wild flowers in so short a space.

She was happy there during those early weeks of their stay, greatly interested in neighborhood affairs and taking an active part in them; too active, perhaps, for her strength suddenly gave way. Howells and two friends called one afternoon. Mrs. Clemens made tea for them in the parlor and seemed to be in her usual spirits. Her social life may be said to have ended with that function. Next day in his notebook Clemens made the following entry:

Tuesday, August 12, 1902. At 7 A.M. Livy taken violently ill. Telephoned and Dr. Lambert was here in ½ hour. She could not breathe—was likely to stifle. Also she had severe palpitation. She believed she was dying. I also believed it.



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

During the rest of that summer her condition remained critical, though she seemed to improve as the weeks passed. In October they brought her to Riverdale in an invalid car; the stout English butler carried her to her room, which she would not leave again for many months.

It was a winter of the deepest anxiety. Mrs. Clemens could see no one longer than a few minutes, and was allowed to hear nothing in the way of disturbing news. When, as presently happened, Jean Clemens was stricken by pneumonia, they had to invent ways to account for her doings. The burden fell upon Clara Clemens, whose presence was soothing to the patient and whose imagination provided pleasant gossip, such as she knew her mother would enjoy. Mark Twain once said that never before in her life had Clara told her mother an untruth, and that one might almost say that never afterward did she tell her anything else.

It was our daily protection from disaster. The mother never doubted Clara's word. Clara could tell her the largest improbabilities without exciting any suspicion, whereas if I tried to market even a small and simple one the case would have been different. I was never able to get a reputation like Clara's.

Mrs. Clemens daily questioned Clara as to Jean's health, clothes, amusements, and the like, and Clara furnished the information in minute detail, getting so tired of Jean's existing clothes that she invented her an entirely new wardrobe, and went on adding to it until warned by her mother that they could not afford any more expenditures.

It was fortunate that Jean had been forbidden to

## YORK HARBOR AND RIVERDALE

see her mother at all, and Clemens himself was allowed only two minutes out of each day, during which he could stand at the foot of the bed and say a few words to the invalid. He spent his time largely in waiting for these two-minute periods, and more than once was disappointed when the time came, the nurse forbidding his entrance. Often he wrote affectionate little messages and pushed them under the door. This was permitted, and Mrs. Clemens was sometimes allowed to answer them.

Mark Twain had been at home well on toward three years, but his popularity showed no signs of diminishing. A constant tide of letters flowed in letters of sympathy, of love, of hearty indorsement concerning his articles looking to political reform. One would like to publish a selection from the letters of this period. Many of them came from children, usually without the hope of a reply, some signed only with initials, that the writers might not be open to the suspicion of being seekers for his autograph. A department in *St. Nicholas* magazine offered a prize for a caricature drawing of some well-known man. There were one or two of prominent politicians and capitalists, and there was literally a wheelbarrow load of Mark Twain. When he was informed of this he wrote:

No tribute could have pleased me more than that, the friendship of the children.

## LXII

### THE PASSING OF OLIVIA CLEMENS

MRS. CLEMENS'S health improved with the return of warm weather. In time she was able to leave her room. Howells tells how one sunny afternoon he and Clemens sat on the grass at Riverdale and "looked up toward a balcony where by and by a lovely presence made itself visible, as if it had stooped there from a cloud. A hand frailly waved a handkerchief." It was a greeting to Howells—the last he would ever receive from her.

She was able to make the trip to Elmira in June, and there during three peaceful months spent her days reclining on the wide veranda, looking down the grassy slope to the drowsy city and the distant hills. A part of the time Mark Twain worked in the old study that had been consecrated by Huck and Tom and the wandering Prince. *A Dog's Tale*, completed that summer, was the last writing he would ever do there. One day he wrote in his notebook:

To-day I placed flowers on Susy's grave—for the last time, probably—and read the words,

Good night, dear heart, good night, good night.

This was October 3d. Two days later they left Elmira for the Hotel Grosvenor in New York, and on the 24th they sailed, with Clara and Jean and

## OLIVIA CLEMENS DIES

Katie Leary, for Italy. Mrs. Clemens stood the voyage remarkably well, and they arrived in Florence full of hope. They had engaged the Villa Quarto, a fine old Italian palace in an ancient garden, looking out over Florence toward Vallombrosa and the Chianti hills. It was a beautiful spot, and Mrs. Clemens's health improved there for a time, in spite of dull, depressing weather; so much so that in May, when the warmth and sun came back, Clemens and Jean went driving about the country, seeking a villa that they might buy as a permanent home.

The invalid was not always well. She had her bad days and her good days, and kept them alternately between hope and despair. In a letter to Richard Watson Gilder, May 12th, Clemens reported that their patient had improved again and looked **bright and young and pretty**. But next day added:

I just paid one of my pair of permitted 2-minute visits per day to the sick room. And I have found what I have learned to expect—retrogression.

There came a day when she was brought out on the terrace in a wheel chair to see the wonder of the early Italian summer. She had been a prisoner so long that she was almost overcome with the delight of it all—the more so, perhaps, in the feeling that she might so soon be leaving it.

Jean and her father were still on the search for a villa, and one golden Sunday morning, the 5th of June, they discovered one which promised to fill most of their requirements. They came home full of enthusiasm concerning it, and in his mind Clemens

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

had decided on the purchase. In the corridor they met Clara, who said:

"She is better to-day than she has been for three months." Then quickly under her breath, "*Unberufen*," which the others also added, hastily, superstitiously.

Mrs. Clemens was, in fact, bright and cheerful. She was anxious to hear all about the new property, and urged her husband to remain during the dinner—a forbidden privilege, but permitted because she was feeling so well. Their talk was as it had been in the old days. Once during it he reproached himself, as he had so often done, and asked forgiveness for the tears he had brought into her life. Summoned to go at last, he chided himself for having remained so long; but she said there was no harm, and kissed him, saying, "You will come back?" And he answered, "Yes, to say good night," meaning at half past nine, as was the permitted custom. He stood a moment at the door, throwing kisses to her, and she returning them, her face bright with smiles.

He was so full of hope—they were going to be happy again. Long ago he had been in the habit of singing jubilee songs to the children. He went upstairs now, to the piano, and played and sang "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and "My Lord He Calls Me." He stopped then, but Jean, who had come in, asked him to go on. Mrs. Clemens from her room heard the music, and said to Katie Leary:

"He is singing a good-night carol to me."

The music ceased presently, and a moment later

## OLIVIA CLEMENS DIES

she asked to be lifted up. Almost in that instant life slipped away without a sound.

Clemens, just then coming to say good night, saw a little group gathered about her bed. He went and bent over and looked into her face, surprised that she did not greet him. He heard Clara ask:

"Katie, is it true? Oh, Katie, is it true?"

Then he realized.

That night in his notebook he wrote:

At a quarter past nine this evening, she that was the life of my life passed to the relief and peace of death, after twenty-two months of unjust and unearned suffering. I first saw her thirty-seven years ago, and now I have looked upon her face for the last time. . . . I was full of remorse for things done and said in these thirty-four years of married life, that have hurt Livy's heart.

And to Howells a few days later:

To-day, treasured in her worn old Testament, I found a dear and gentle letter from you, dated Far Rockaway, September 13, 1896, about our poor Susy's death. I am tired and old; I wish I were with Livy.

They brought her to America, and from the house, and the rooms, where she had been made a bride bore her to her grave beside Susy and little Langdon.

## LXIII

### REMAKING A HOME .

THERE was an extra cottage on the Gilder Place, at Tyringham, Massachusetts, and Clemens took his daughters there for the rest of that sad summer. In the autumn he leased a house in New York City, on Fifth Avenue at the corner of Ninth Street, No. 21. The home furniture was brought from Hartford, unwrapped, and established in its new environment. He wrote:

We have not seen it for thirteen years. Katie Leary, our old housekeeper, who has been in our service more than twenty-four years, cried when she told me about it to-day.

Mark Twain had done some work at Tyringham—one or two articles, and the beginning, at least, of *Eve's Diary*, which, in spite of its amusing aspects, is full of tenderness, and in the most reverential sense conveys his love—his adoration—for the one he had laid away. Adam's single comment at the end, "Wheresoever she was, there was Eden," was his own comment, and perhaps the most beautiful line he ever wrote. An article on "Saint Joan of Arc" in the Christmas *Harper's* (1904) stimulated a fresh interest in the *Recollections* published nine years earlier. A distinguished educator wrote:

I would rather have written your history of Joan of Arc than any other piece of literature in any language.

## REMAKING A HOME

The house at 21 Fifth Avenue, with the Hartford furnishings distributed through it, was a suitable setting for Mark Twain. But it was lonely for him. He added presently a great Æolian orchestrelle, with a variety of music for his different moods. He had an ear for melody and stately rhythmic measures.

He went out little that winter, usually to the homes of old and intimate friends. At moments he relieved himself by writing—protests, mainly, against existing evils or unhappy conditions. Among these was "King Leopold's Soliloquy," the imagined reflections of that fiendish sovereign who in his greed had slaughtered fifteen millions of men, women, and little children, harmless blacks, in his Congo rubber fields.

Once, at this period, he wrote a "War Prayer," supposed to have been uttered by a mysterious, white-robed stranger who enters a church during those ceremonies that precede the marching of a nation's armies to battle. The minister had prayed for victory—a prayer which the stranger interprets as a petition that the enemies' lands shall be laid waste, his soldiers torn by shells, his people turned out roofless to wander their desolated fields in rags and hunger. It was a scathing arraignment of war, a prophecy which has since been literally fulfilled.

Much of what he wrote at this time he did not print. When he had produced something especially violent he read it to a friend who dropped in, or mailed it to Twichell, who, whether he agreed with him or not, would at least understand him. In a letter accompanying one manuscript he wrote:



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

I *have* to work my bile off whenever it gets to where I can't stand it, but I can work it off on you economically, because I don't have to make it suit me. It may not suit you, but that isn't any matter; I'm not writing it for that. I have used you as an equilibrium-restorer more than once in my time, and shall continue, I guess. . . . I can't use Howells; he is busy and old and lazy, and won't stand it. I *dasn't* use Clara; there's things I have to say which she wouldn't put up with—a very dear little ash-cat, but has claws.

And so—you're It.

For the summer of 1905 he took a summer home at Dublin, New Hampshire—"Lonetree Hill," on the Monadnock Slope. It was a charming locality, and for neighbors there were artists, literary people, and those of kindred pursuits, among them a number of old friends. Here he finished *Eve's Diary*, an article entitled "Interpreting the Deity," his story, *A Horse's Tale*, written at the suggestion of Minnie Maddern Fiske, and he completed a large part of a fantastic tale, a sort of scientific revel, or revelry, entitled "3000 Years Among the Microbes—by a Microbe." It was a satire, of course—Gulliver's Lilliput outdone. He never finished it—never *could* finish it, for it ran off into amazing by-paths that led nowhere and the tale was lost. Its chief mission was to divert him during those days and nights when he would otherwise have brooded upon his loneliness.

## LXIV

### MARK TWAIN AT "PIER 70"

MARK TWAIN was nearing seventy—the scriptural limitation of life—and the returns were coming in. Some one of the old group was dying all the time—the roll call returned only a scattering answer. Of his oldest friends, John Hay, Sir Henry Irving, and Charles Henry Webb all died that year. He felt that he had not much left to celebrate, and when Col. George Harvey, head of Harper & Brothers, proposed a birthday dinner in his honor Clemens suggested a small Bohemian assembly in some snug place, with Howells, Rogers, Twichell, and such other kindred souls as still remained.

Colonel Harvey had something different in mind. He felt that the attainment of seventy years by America's most distinguished private citizen was an occasion for general rejoicing. The actual birthday fell on the 30th of November, but the dinner was set for five days later, in order not to conflict with Thanksgiving celebrations. Invitations were sent to practically every writer of distinction in America, and to many abroad. Nearly two hundred accepted. The others returned tender messages of regret.

What an occasion it was! the flower of American literature assembled to do honor to its chief. When Colonel Harvey presented William Dean Howells, who after a brief poem introduced the guest of the

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

evening with the words, "I will not say, O King, live forever, but, O King, live as long as you like," and Mark Twain stood before them, his snow-white hair gleaming, his face filled with that youth which never died, it seems that the whole world suddenly spoke out in a voice of welcome. With a great tumult the throng rose, a billow of life, the white waving napkins flying foamlike on its crest.

We who had gathered there realized that it was a mighty moment, not only in his life, but ours. We were there to see this supreme embodiment of the American spirit as he scaled the mountain top. He, too, must have realized the drama of that moment—the marvel of it—and flashed a swift view backward over the long way he had come, to stand; as he had himself once expressed it, "for a single splendid moment, on the Alps of fame, outlined against the sun." He must have remembered, for when he came to speak he turned back to the morning of life, to his very first banquet, sketched the meagerness of the little hamlet that had seen his birth, the flickering uncertainty of his early years, told it playfully, delightfully, until his hearers laughed and shouted, but with a tenderness under it all, and our tears were never far beneath the surface. He spoke of his habits of life, his irregularities of sleep and diet; how he had attained seventy by faithfully sticking to a scheme of living that would kill anybody else. Then at the last he reached the unforgettable close:

Threescore years and ten!

It is the scriptural statute of limitations. After that you owe no active duties; for you the strenuous life is over. You

## MARK TWAIN AT "PIER 70"

are a time-expired man, to use Kipling's military phrase: You have served your term, well or less well, and you are mustered out. You are become an honorary member of the republic, you are emancipated, compulsions are not for you, nor any bugle call but "lights out." You pay the time-worn duty bills if you choose, or decline if you prefer—and without prejudice—for they are not legally collectible.

The previous-engagement plea, which in forty years has cost you so many twinges, you can lay aside forever; on this side of the grave you will never need it again. If you shrink at thought of night, and winter, and the late homecomings from the banquet and the lights and laughter through the deserted streets—a desolation which would not remind you now, as for a generation it did, that your friends are sleeping and you must creep in a tiptoe and not disturb them, but would only remind you that you need not tiptoe, you can never disturb them more—if you shrink at the thought of these things you need only reply, "Your invitation honors me and pleases me because you still keep me in your remembrance, but I am seventy; seventy, and would nestle in the chimney corner, and smoke my pipe, and read my book, and take my rest, wishing you well in all affection, and that when you in your turn shall arrive at Pier 70 you may step aboard your waiting ship with a reconciled spirit, and lay your course toward the sinking sun with a contented heart."

The tears that had been lying in wait were not restrained now. If there were any present who did not let them flow without shame, who did not shout their applause from throats choked with sobs, the writer of these lines failed to notice them.

Many of his old friends, one after another, rose to tell their love for him—Brander Matthews, Cable, Kate Douglas Wiggin, Gilder, Carnegie, Bangs, Bacheller—they kept it up far into the next morning. No other arrival at Pier 70 ever awoke a grander welcome.

## LXV

### MARK TWAIN ARRANGES FOR HIS<sup>1</sup> BIOGRAPHY

FROM this point our history becomes a personal narrative in which the writer himself has a part.

I first saw Mark Twain on New Year's Eve, 1901, at the Players Club, where he made the Founder's Night address with which some distinguished member always closes the old year and begins the new. As I entered the club he was sitting on a couch near the dining room, talking earnestly to some one, who I think did not enter my consciousness at all. I saw only the crown of white hair and heard the slow, measured speech of the man who had been my literary idol since childhood. I remember that I was surprised to see how frail and old he looked. I did not realize that this was a temporary condition, due to a period of poor health and heavy social demands. I have no idea how long I stood there watching him, but he rose presently and came directly toward me. A year before I had done what new writers were always doing—I had sent him a book I had written, and he had done what he was always doing—acknowledged it with a kindly letter. I now made my thanks an excuse for addressing him. It warmed me to hear him say that he remembered the book, though at the time I confess I thought it doubtful.

## MARK TWAIN'S BIOGRAPHY

Then he passed on, but my mind and ear had photographed those vivid first impressions that remain always clear.

It was the following spring that I next saw him—at an afternoon gathering, and the memory of that occasion is chiefly important because I met Mrs. Clemens there for the only time, and, like all who met her, however briefly, felt the gentleness and beauty of her spirit.

It was three years before I saw Mark Twain again, though a sort of acquaintance had progressed between us. I was writing the *Life of Thomas Nast* and found among the material letters from Mark Twain. I was anxious to use them, and wrote, asking permission, which was generously granted. It would have been courtesy to send him a copy of the book when it appeared, but it was during his period of sorrow and absence, and the matter was postponed. Then came the night of his seventieth-birthday dinner, with an opportunity for a brief exchange of words. I sent him the book next day, with no thought of hearing from it again.

Something less than a month later I was invited to join in a small private dinner to be given to Mark Twain at the Players, in celebration of his having been elected an honorary member of that club. I was in the Players a day or two in advance of the date, and David Munro, of the *North American Review*, a man whose gentle and kindly nature made him "David" to all who knew him, greeted me joyfully, his eyes eager with something he knew I would wish to hear. He had been chosen, he said, to pro-

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

pose the dinner to Mark Twain, and had found him propped up in bed, beside him a copy of the *Nast* book. I suspect now that David, out of his generous heart, prompted Mark Twain to speak of the book, and that the result lost nothing in David's eager retelling. But I was too proud and happy to question any feature of the precious compliment, and Munro—always most happy in making others happy—found opportunity to repeat it—even to improve upon it, usually in the presence of others—several times during the evening.

The dinner of January 3, 1906, remains as a memory apart from other dinners. The picture of the Players private dining room that night is still clear to me: the long table expanded to its limit, the unique electric chandelier above it, the rich, shadowy walls. It is a room that has known much distinguished entertainment; it has even made history. Henry James delivered his first after-dinner speech there, for one thing, though this is by the way. I remember the room that night, as I have said, but chiefly as background. What I really see is the assemblage around the gleaming table. Brander Matthews presided; and the knightly Frank Millet, who would one day go down on the *Titanic*, was there, and Gilder, and Munro, and David Bispham, and Robert Reid, with others of their sort—twenty-five, I think, in all. It so happened that my seat was nearly facing the guest of the evening, who, by a custom of the Players, is placed at the side and not at the distant end of the long table. Regarding him at leisure, I saw that he was no longer frail and thin,

## MARK TWAIN'S BIOGRAPHY

as when I had first met him. He had an alert, rested look; his complexion had the tints of a miniature painting. Lit by the glow of the shaded candles, with the dusk richness of the walls behind him, he made a figure of striking beauty. I could not take my eyes from it, for it stirred in me the farthest memories. I saw the interior of a farmhouse sitting room in the middle West where, a boy of eight, I had first heard the name of Mark Twain, and where night after night a group gathered around the evening lamp to hear the story of the "Innocents" on their long pilgrimage. To Charles Harvey Genung, who sat next to me, I whispered something of this, and how, during the thirty-six years since then, no one had meant to me quite what Mark Twain had meant. Now here he was, just across the table. It was a fairy tale come true.

Genung said, "You should write his life."

It seemed to me no more than a pleasant remark, and as such I put it aside. He came back to it more than once, urging in support of his idea the word that Munro had brought concerning the biography of Nast. I put him off, saying that some one of larger experience and closer association must already have been given the task. Then the speaking began—delightful, intimate speaking—during which the matter passed entirely from my mind. Later in the evening, when we had left our seats and were drifting about the table, I found a chance to say a word to our guest about his story of Joan, which I had recently reread. To my happiness, he detained me while he recalled the long-ago incident—the stray



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

leaf from Joan's life blown to him by the wind—which had awakened his interest not only in the martyred girl, but in all literature. I think we broke up soon after and descended to the lower rooms. At any rate, I recall that presently the faithful Charles Genung was again urging me in the matter of the biography. Perhaps it was the brief sympathy established by the name of Joan of Arc; perhaps it was only Genung's insistent purpose; whatever it was, there came an impulse, in the instant of bidding good-by to our guest of honor, which prompted me to say:

"May I call to see you, Mr. Clemens, some day?"

And something—to this day I wonder what it was—prompted him to answer:

"Yes, come soon."

This was on Wednesday night, or rather on Thursday morning, for it was past midnight, and a day later I made an appointment with his secretary to call on Saturday.

I can truly say that I set out with no real hope of success. I know I did not have the courage even to confide in Genung that I was going. I arrived at 21 Fifth Avenue, where, waiting in the long drawing-room, I found a curious interest in the pictures, the books, and the objects along the shelves. A few moments later I was ascending the dim stairs, wondering why I had come on so futile an errand, trying to think of an excuse to offer for having come at all.

He was propped up in bed—a regal bed from a dismantled Italian palace—sitting, as was his habit,

## MARK TWAIN'S BIOGRAPHY

with his back to the foot of the bed, so that he might have always before him the rich carved beauty of the headboard. He was delving through a copy of *Huckleberry Finn* in search of a paragraph concerning which some unknown correspondent had inquired. As I entered the room he began commenting rather caustically on this correspondent and on miscellaneous letter-writing in general. He pushed the cigars toward me, and the talk blended into gossip of other matters. By and by I told him what so many thousands had told him before, what he had meant to me, recalling my impressions of that large black-and-gilt book, with its wonderful pictures and adventures, the story of *The Innocents Abroad*. Very likely it bored him, he had heard it so often, and he was willing enough, I dare say, to let me change the subject, and thanked him for the kindly word which David Munro had brought. Then presently I found myself saying that out of his encouragement had grown a hope—though certainly it was something less—that I might some day undertake a book with Mark Twain as the subject. I expected the chapter to end at this point, and the silence which followed seemed long and ominous.

He said, at last, that at various times through his life he had been preparing autobiographical chapters, but that he had wearied of the undertaking and put it aside. He added that he hoped his daughters would one day collect his letters, but that a biography—a detailed story of personality and performance—was of course another matter, and that for such a work no arrangement had been made. I

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

think he added one or two other general remarks. Then turning those piercing, agate-blue eyes directly upon me, he said:

"When would you like to begin?"

There was a dresser with a large mirror behind him. I happened to catch my reflection in it, and I vividly recollect saying to it, mentally: "This is not true; it is only one of many similar dreams. But even in a dream one must answer, and I said:

"Whenever you like. I can begin now."

He was always eager in any new undertaking.

"Very good," he replied. "The sooner, then, the better. Let's begin while we are in the humor. The longer you postpone a thing the less likely you are ever to get at it."

I have said that this was on Saturday. My family was in the country; it would require a day or two to get established in the city. I mentioned this, and asked if Tuesday, January 9th, would be too soon to begin. He agreed that Tuesday would do, and inquired something about my plan of work. I replied that in similar undertakings I had employed a stenographer to take notes, dictated by the subject himself; such notes to be supplemented with every variety of material obtainable—letters, journals, and what not. He said:

"I think I should enjoy dictating to a stenographer, with some one to prompt me and to act as audience. The room adjoining this was fitted up for my study. My manuscripts and notes and private books and many of my letters are there; and there is a trunkful or two of such things in the attic. I seldom use the

## MARK TWAIN'S BIOGRAPHY

room myself. I do my writing and reading in bed. I will turn that room over to you for this work. Whatever you need will be brought to you. We can have the dictation here in the morning and you can put in the rest of the day to suit yourself. You can have a key and come and go as you please."

That was his regal way; he did nothing by halves—nothing without unquestioning confidence and prodigality. He got up and showed me the lovely luxury of the study, with its treasures of material. I did not believe it true yet; it had all the atmosphere of a dream, and I have no distinct recollection of how I came away. I know that, by and by, back at the Players, I was confiding the marvel of it to Charles Harvey Genung, who professed to believe it all and pretended that he was not surprised.

## LXVI

### WORKING WITH MARK TWAIN

WE followed our program. On Tuesday morning, January 9, 1906, I brought a capable stenographer, and the work began.

Mark Twain, however, had been revolving our plans and now proposed to double the value of our employment by letting his dictations continue his earlier autobiographical chapters. He would pay the stenographer, he said, and own the notes, allowing me free use of them as material. He added that he would like to dictate as his fancy prompted, without trying to follow any particular biographical order. It would be easy enough to arrange the chronology later. He said I might suggest subjects for dictation, or at any time ask questions. I assented to everything, of course, and we set to work without further prologue.

As on my former visit, he was in bed when we arrived, propped against great, snowy pillows, though clad now in a rich dressing gown. He loved this loose luxury and ease, and found it conducive to thought. A small table beside him held his pipes, cigars, pencils, etc., also a reading lamp, the soft light of which brought out his brilliant coloring and the gleam of his snowy hair. There was daylight, too, but it was a dull winter daylight from the north, while

## WORKING WITH MARK TWAIN

the walls of the room were a deep, unreflecting red. Altogether the picture was unforgettable.

He dictated that morning certain memories of the Comstock mine; then drifted back to his childhood, closing with some comment on current affairs. It was all absorbingly interesting; his quaint, unhurried fashion of speech; the unconscious habits of his delicate hands; the play of his features as his fancies and phrases passed in mental review and were accepted or waved aside. We were watching one of the great literary creators of his time in the very process of his architecture. We constituted about the most select audience in the world, enjoying what was likely enough its most remarkable entertainment. When he turned at last and asked the time we were all amazed that two hours and more had slipped away.

"And how much I have enjoyed it!" he said. "It is the ideal plan for this kind of work. Narrative writing is always disappointing. The moment you pick up a pen you begin to lose the spontaneity of the personal relation, which contains the very essence of interest. With shorthand dictation one can talk as if he were at his own dinner table—always a most inspiring place. I expect to dictate all the rest of my life, if you good people are willing to come and listen to it."

The dictations thus begun continued steadily and with increasing charm. We never knew what he was going to talk about, and it was seldom that *he* knew, until the moment of beginning; then he went drifting among episodes, incidents, and periods, in

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

his irresponsible fashion—the fashion of table conversation, as he called it—the methodless method of the human mind. It was always delightful, always amusing, tragic, or instructive, and the change from one phase to another was likely to be instantaneous. I felt myself the most fortunate biographer in the world, as undoubtedly I was, though not just in the way I first imagined.

It was not for several weeks that I began to realize that these marvelous dictated chapters bore only an atmospheric relation to history—that they were aspects of biography rather than its veritable narrative, built largely, sometimes wholly, from imagination. The creator of Tom Sawyer, and Huck Finn, had been embroidering old incidents or inventing new ones too long to stick to history now—to be able to separate the romance from the reality. Furthermore, his memory—always uncertain as to personal happenings—had become even less reliable with age. He realized this, and once, in his whimsical, gentle way, remarked:

“When I was younger I could remember anything, whether it happened or not; but I am getting old, and soon I shall remember only the latter.”

Yet it was his constant purpose to be faithful to fact, and especially did he make no effort to put himself in a good light. Indeed, if you wanted to know the worst of Mark Twain you had only to ask him for it. He would give it to the last syllable—worse than the worst, for his imagination would magnify it and adorn it with new iniquities; and if he gave it again, or a dozen times, he would improve

## WORKING WITH MARK TWAIN

upon it each time, until the thread of history was almost impossible to trace through the marvel of that fabric.

In the talks I had with him when the stenographer was gone I got much that was of great value. Imagination was then temporarily dispossessed and he spoke without thought of literary or dramatic effect. I seldom asked him a question during the dictations, or interrupted him in any way, though he had asked me to stop him when I found him repeating or contradicting himself, or misstating some fact known to me. At first I lacked the courage to point out a mistake, at the moment, and cautiously mentioned the matter when he had finished. Then he would be likely to say:

"Why didn't you stop me? Why did you let me go on making a jackass of myself, when you could have saved me?"

So then I used to take the risk of getting struck by lightning, and nearly always stopped him. But if it happened that I upset his thought the thunderbolt was apt to fly. He would say:

"Now you have knocked everything out of my head."

Then, of course, I was sorry, and apologized, and in a moment the sky was clear again. There was generally a humorous complexion to the dictations, whatever the subject.

Perhaps I should have said sooner that he smoked continuously during the dictations. His cigars were of that delicious fragrance which belongs to domestic tobacco. They were strong and inexpen-



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

sive, and it was only his early training that made him prefer them. Admiring friends used to send him costly imported cigars, but he rarely touched them and they were consumed by visitors. He often smoked a pipe, and preferred it to be old and violent. Once, soon after we began our work, he bought a new expensive brier root, which he handed to me, saying:

"I'd like to have you smoke that a year or two, and when it gets so you cannot stand it maybe it will suit me."

I did smoke it "a year or two," then handed it back to him, but it was never strong enough, and he eventually made my title to it complete. He complained that the tobacco I used was too mild.

The house at 21 Fifth Avenue was an interesting place. Distinguished persons were always calling, and there was a perpetual string of those who came with propositions, or compliments, or merely to see the man whose work they had read, or whose name they had so often heard, and seen in print. He saw as many as he could, but of course his days were very full. Now and then his secretary would be allowed to admit a visitor who was evidently sincere and not too heavily charged with eloquence. Of these there came one day a very gentle-spoken woman who had promised that she would stay but a moment and say no more than a few words, if only she might sit face to face with the great man. It was the morning hour before the dictations, and he received her, quite correctly clad, in his beautiful dressing robe and propped against his pillows. She

## WORKING WITH MARK TWAIN

kept her contract to the letter, but when she rose to go she said, in a voice of deepest reverence:

"May I kiss your hand?"

It was a delicate situation and it might easily have been made ludicrous. Denial would have hurt her. As it was he lifted his hand—a small, exquisite hand it was—with the gentle dignity and poise of a king, and she touched her lips to it with what was certainly adoration. Then as she went she said:

"How God must love you!"

"I hope so," he said, softly, and did not even smile. But after she had gone he could not help saying, in a quaint, half-pathetic voice, "I guess she hasn't heard of our strained relations."

Mark Twain made a number of speeches that winter. He spoke at Carnegie Hall, in behalf of Booker T. Washington's work for the welfare of the negro; he spoke at a meeting assembled in aid of the adult blind; he spoke one Sunday afternoon for the Y. M. C. A., and the riot caused by a multitude that demanded entrance and tried to stampede the doors nearly broke up the meeting. In April, for the benefit of the Robert Fulton Society, he delivered his "farewell lecture"—the last lecture, he said, where anyone would have to pay to hear him.

He also attended a good many banquets and his speeches were widely quoted. An editorial in the *Evening Mail* declared that things had reached a point where Mark Twain was "expected either to attend every public meeting and banquet or to contribute one of his inimitable letters of advice and encouragement."

## LXVII

### ON THE SLOPES OF MONADNOCK

MAY came, and with it another summer journey to the Monadnock slopes—this time to the Upton House, which stands on the edge of a beautiful beech forest, well up the mountain side, with a noble view of the twin peaks, the far-stretching forest, shimmering lakes and distant blue hills. We renewed the dictations there—in his bedroom at first, but at the end of the session we descended to the veranda and stood facing the wide expanse of scenery.

"I think I shall like it," he said, "when I get acquainted with it and get it classified and labeled; and I think we'll do our dictating out here hereafter. It ought to be an inspiring place."

So the dictations were transferred to the long veranda, and he was generally ready for them, dressed all in white, pacing up and down before that panoramic background. Through the earlier, cooler weeks he usually continued walking with measured step during the dictations. When it stormed we moved into the great living room, where, at one end, there was a fireplace with blazing logs, and at the other the great orchestrelle, which had been freighted up those mountain heights.

## ON THE SLOPES OF MONADNOCK

In time Mark Twain became lonely in Dublin. After the brilliant winter the contrast was very great. In one of his dictations he said:

"I feel for Adam and Eve now, for I know how it was with them. I am existing, broken-hearted, in a Garden of Eden. . . . The Garden of Eden I now know was an unfendurable solitude. I know that the advent of the serpent was a welcome change—anything for society."

He had never outgrown his love for cats, and from a neighbor had rented for the summer a trio of kittens. He didn't wish to own them, for then he would have to leave them behind, uncared for; so he preferred to rent them and pay sufficiently to insure their subsequent care. These kittens he called Sackcloth and Ashes—Ashes being the joint name for two who were so nearly alike that they could not be told apart. Their gambols always amused him. He would stop any time in the midst of dictation to enjoy them. Once, as he was about to enter the screen door that led into the hall, two of the kittens ran up in front of him and stood waiting. With grave politeness he opened the door, made a low bow, stepped back, and said:

"Walk in, gentlemen. I always give precedence to royalty."

And the kittens marched in, tails in the air.

For many years Mark Twain had been working from time to time at a manuscript which he referred to as his "gospel." It was his philosophy of life—rather one of his philosophies of life, for he had many moods, and he fitted his philosophies to his

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

moods. He decided now to print these chapters anonymously, and arranged with Frank Doubleday to take charge of the matter. A few copies were distributed among friends, and a number were sent to newspaper reviewers, who, curiously enough, seem never to have guessed the book's authorship.

Perhaps Mark Twain expected *What Is Man?* to raise a storm of discussion, and it might have done so had it appeared over his signature. A great deal more interest was aroused by the publication of some of his autobiographical chapters which he had been persuaded by Colonel Harvey to give to the *North American Review*. With the money received for these chapters, thirty thousand dollars, Clemens decided to build a summer home on some property which I had bought for him at Redding, Connecticut, earlier in the year.

He had not seen this property. I owned a small place in Redding, and, once hearing me speak of it, he had been taken with one of his enthusiasms and asked me to obtain such a place for him. I did so, securing an old house, and later, when he decided to build, added to the land, acquiring in all something like three hundred acres, including a beautiful hill-top where it was decided by Clara Clemens—the only one of the family to visit the place—that the house should stand. Howells's son, John Mead Howells, a distinguished architect, was engaged to draw the plans. Clemens specified only that he wanted a big living room with a place for the orchestrelle, and a good-sized billiard room, the prevailing color of which was to be red.

## LXVIII

### PLAYING BILLIARDS WITH MARK TWAIN

WITH our return to New York there began for me a period of closer association with Mark Twain. Up to that time our relations had been chiefly of a literary nature; they were now to become personal as well.

It happened in this way: Mark Twain, as we have seen, had never outgrown his love for billiards and had made a billiard room one of the chief specifications for his new house. He had not owned a table, however, since the closing of the Hartford home, fifteen years before. Mrs. Henry Rogers now proposed to present him with a new one, for Christmas, but when he heard of the plan he could not wait, and delicately hinted that if he had the table "right now" he could begin to use it sooner. So with Mr. Rogers he went one day to the billiard warerooms and selected a handsome combination table, the best that money could buy. He was greatly excited over the prospect. His former bedroom was carefully measured to be certain that it was large enough for billiard purposes; his bed was moved into the study; some appropriate pictures were hung; the new table arrived and was set in place.

Clemens, meantime, with one of his sudden impulses, had decided to spend the winter in Egypt, on

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

the Nile. He first mentioned this on the morning when we renewed the New York dictations, which also happened to be the morning that the new billiard table arrived. When the dictation ended he said:

"Have you any special place to lunch to-day?"

I replied that I had not.

"Lunch here," he said, "and we'll try the new billiard table."

I confessed that I knew very little of the game, which was eminently true.

"No matter," he answered; "the poorer you play the better I shall like it."

So I remained for luncheon, and afterward we began the first game ever played on the "Christmas table." He taught me a game in which caroms and pockets both count, and gave me heavy odds. He beat me, but it was a riotous, rollicking experience, the beginning of a closer relation between us. When it was ended he said:

"I'm not going to Egypt. There was a man here yesterday who said it was bad for bronchitis, and besides, it's too far away from this billiard table."

We played most of the afternoon, and he suggested that I come back in the evening and play some more. I did so, and the game lasted until after midnight. I had beginner's luck—"nigger luck," as he called it—and he was kept sweating, and swearing feverishly, to win. Once I made a great fluke—a carom followed by most of the balls dropping into the pocket.

"Well," he said, "when you pick up that cue this damn table drips at every pore."

## PLAYING BILLIARDS

After that the morning dictations became of secondary interest. Like a boy, he was looking forward to the afternoon of play, and it never seemed to come quickly enough to suit him. I remained regularly for luncheon, and he was inclined to cut the courses short, that he might sooner get upstairs to the billiard room. He did not eat the mid-day meal himself, but he would come down and walk up and down the dining room, talking that marvelous talk which I was always trying to remember. To him it was only a method of killing time, and once when he had been discussing something with great earnestness he suddenly noticed the luncheon was about over.

"Now," he said, "we'll proceed to more serious matters—it's your—shot."

He wrote to Mrs. Rogers that a billiard table was better than the doctors:

The games begin right after luncheon, daily, and continue until midnight, with 2 hours intermission for dinner and music. And so, it is 9 hours exercise per day, and ten or twelve on Sunday. . . . We are going to build a house on my farm an hour and a half from New York. It is decided.

My game improved with practice and he reduced my odds accordingly. We kept a record of our score, and, like any other boy, he went to bed happier if the tally-sheet showed a balance in his favor. He was willing to be beaten, but not too often.

It was natural that an intimacy of association and personal interest should grow under such conditions, and I was boundlessly grateful to Mrs. Rogers for her gift, which, whatever it meant to him, meant so



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

much more to me. Our disparity of ages and attainments no longer existed. The pleasant land of play is a democracy where such things do not count.

To recall all the humors and interesting happenings of those early billiard days would be to fill a large volume. He was not an even-tempered player. When the balls were perverse in their movements and his aim unsteady he was likely to be short with his opponent, even faultfinding. Then presently he would be seized with remorse and become overgentle, even attentive, placing the balls as I knocked them into the pockets, hurrying the length of the table to render this service. At one time when he found it impossible to make any of his favorite shots he grew more and more restive—the lightning became vividly picturesque as the clouds blackened. Finally, with a regular thunderblast, he seized the cue with both hands and literally mowed the balls from the table, landing at least two of them on the floor. I do not recall his remarks—I was chiefly concerned in getting out of the way. I gathered up the balls and we went on playing as if nothing had happened, only he was very gentle and sweet, like the sun on the meadows after the storm has passed by. Presently he said:

“This is a most amusing game. When you play badly it amuses me, and when I play badly and lose my temper it certainly must amuse you.”

He was always inventing new games, and new rules for them, and it especially amused him to invent a rule in the middle of the shot that would advantage himself or work damage to his opponent. If objec-

## PLAYING BILLIARDS

tion was made to this he would argue the matter with apparent seriousness, and then pretend to make a great sacrifice by yielding.

Other billiardists dropped in from time to time. Any number of his friends were willing, even eager, to come for his entertainment. But the percentage of them who could afford to devote a number of hours each day to being beaten at billiards and enjoy the operation dwindled down to a single individual. Even I could not have done it, could not have afforded it, had it not been contributory to my work. To me the association was invaluable; it drew from him a thousand long-forgotten incidents; it invited a stream of picturesque comments and philosophies; it furnished the most intimate insight into his character.

We celebrated his seventy-first birthday by playing billiards all day. He invented a new game for the occasion, and new rules for it with almost every shot. It happened that no members of his family were home on his birthday. Ill health had banished everyone, even his secretary. Flowers, telegrams, and congratulations came, and a string of callers. He saw only the Gilders, late in the afternoon. We were entirely alone at dinner, and I felt the great honor of being his only guest on such an occasion. A year earlier the flower of his profession had assembled to pay him tribute.

Once between the courses, when he rose as usual to walk about, he wandered into the drawing-room and, seating himself at the orchestrelle, began to play the beautiful flower song from "Faust" It

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

was a thing I had not seen him do before and I never saw him do it again. Returning to the table, he said:

"Speaking of companions of the long ago, after fifty years they become only shadows and might as well be in the grave. Only those who one has really loved mean anything at all. Of my playmates, I recall John Briggs, John Garth, and Laura Hawkins—just those three. The rest I buried long ago, and memory cannot even find their graves."

He was in his loveliest humor all that day and evening; and that night when he stopped playing he said, "I have never had a pleasanter day at this game."

I answered, "I hope ten years from to-night we shall still be playing it."

"Yes," he said, "still playing the best game on earth."

For a full ten days we were alone in the big house with the servants. It was holiday most of the time. We hurried through the mail in the morning, then, while I answered such letters as required attention, he dictated for an hour or so on the autobiography; after which, billiards for the day and evening.

In December we made a trip to Washington, in the interest of the new copyright bill. It was a highly interesting experience, but can only be briefly touched upon here. Speaker Cannon ("Uncle Joe") gave us his private room in the Capitol as lobbying headquarters—probably the only instance of the sort on record—and there, all one afternoon, in an air blue with cigar smoke, Mark Twain, dressed

## PLAYING BILLIARDS

in creamy white, received a stream of Congressmen, and preached to them the gospel of copyright.

I might have mentioned earlier that Mark Twain was now wearing white, regardless of the weather and season. On our return from Dublin he had said: •

"I can't bear to put on black clothes again. I wish I could wear white all winter. . . . When I put on black it reminds me of my funerals," and it was not long after that he said, "I have made up my mind not to wear black any more, but white, and let the critics say what they will."

Of course the newspaper reporters and artists had exploited the "white-flannel suit," and in Washington our apartment at the New Willard was besieged by interviewers who were apparently quite as much interested in Mark Twain's wardrobe as in copyright.

## LXIX

### DAYS OF CLOSER INTIMACY

FROM the Washington trip dates a period of still closer association with Mark Twain. On our way home he suggested that I take up residence in his house. There was room going to waste, he said, and it would be handier for the early and late billiard sessions. I assented, of course, and after that most of the days and far into the night we were together.

Looking back at that time now, I see pretty vividly three quite distinct pictures. One of them the rich, red interior of the billiard room, with the brilliant green square in the center, on which the gay balls are rolling, and bending over it a white, luminous figure in the instant of play.

Then there is the long, lighted drawing-room, with the same figure stretched on a couch in the corner, drowsily smoking, while the rich organ tones fill the place, summoning for him scenes and faces which the others do not see. Sometimes he rose, walking the length of the parlors, his step timed to the music and his thought. Of medium height, he gave the impression of being tall—his head thrown up and, like a lion's, rather large for his body. But oftener he lay among the cushions, the light flooding his white hair and dress and heightening his brilliant coloring.

## DAYS OF CLOSER INTIMACY

The third picture is that of the dinner table—always beautifully laid and always a fount of wisdom when he was there. He did not always talk, but it was his habit to do so, and I see him clearest now, his face alive with interest, presenting some new angle of thought in his inimitable speech. These are the pictures that have remained to me, and they do not fade away.

How I wish the marvelous things he said would remain as clear! They came unpremeditated and possessed a quality which no art could reproduce. I preserved some of them as best I could, and in time trained myself to recall portions of his exact phrasing. Even so, they never seemed quite as he had said them; they lacked personality.

The dinner-table talk naturally varied in character from that of the billiard room. The latter was likely to be more anecdotal and personal. The former often ranged through a variety of subjects—scientific, political, and religious. Often it was of infinity—the forces of creation—satire of the orthodox conceptions, heresies of his own devising. Once he said:

“No one who thinks can imagine the universe made by chance. It is too nicely assembled and regulated. There is, of course, a great Master Mind, but it cares nothing for our happiness or our unhappiness. . . . The human conception is that God is sitting up nights, worrying over the individuals of this infinitesimal race.”

But we cannot follow Mark Twain's talk here. Much of it has been set down elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In *Mark Twain—A Biography*.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Of his billiard-room talk, also, we can preserve but little. He did not talk or wished to be talked to when the game was actually in progress. If there was anything to be said on either side he would stop and rest his cue on the floor, or sit down on the couch until the matter was concluded. At one such time he told me of his three recurrent dreams; one of which was that because of reduced circumstances he had returned to piloting and found himself always on the brink of some night disaster. Another was that he had returned to lecturing and could not hold his audience, but in the semi-darkness was talking to an empty house. The third was that dream common to most of us, of being in the midst of company, scantily clad.

"People don't seem to notice me there, at first; then pretty soon somebody points me out, and they all begin to look at me suspiciously and I can see they are wondering who I am and why I am there in that costume. Then it occurs to me that I can fix it by making myself known. I take hold of some man and whisper to him, 'I am Mark Twain,' but that does not improve it, for immediately I can hear him whispering to the others, 'He says he is Mark Twain,' and they look at me a good deal more suspiciously than before; and I can see they don't believe it and that it was a mistake to make that confession."

Now and again some curious episode of the world's history would flash upon him—something amusing or coarse or tragic—and he would bring the game to a standstill and recount it with wonderful accuracy

## DAYS OF CLOSER INTIMACY

as to date and circumstances. He had a natural passion for historic events, and a gift for mentally fixing them. But his memory in other ways was seldom reliable. He was likely to forget the names even of those he knew best and saw oftenest, while the small details of life seldom registered at all.

Clemens made a trip to Bermuda during the winter, taking Twichell along, their first return to that happy island since their "idle excursion" in 1877, recorded by Mark Twain in *Some Rambling Notes*. Later in the year (March, 1907) I also made a journey—a pilgrimage to the Mississippi and the Pacific coast, to see those few still remaining who had known Mark Twain in his youth. It was a long, successful trip and undertaken none too soon. John Briggs, a gentle-hearted man, talked with me by his fire during a memorable afternoon, and reviewed the pranks of those days along the river, and in the cave, and on Holliday's Hill. I think it was six weeks later that he died, while others of that scattering procession did not reach the end of the year. Joe Goodman was not one of these. He was still in full vigor, and journeyed with me to the green and dreamy solitudes of Jackass Hill. Jim Cillis, down in Sonora, already at the point of death, was unable to see me, but his brother Steve, Mark Twain's boon companion, occupied a cabin on the old spot where Jim and Dick Stoker had led their simple, idyllic existence fifty years before. Steve Gillis was an invalid, but the fire was still in his eyes and speech as he sat up on his couch and told old tales and adventures. When I left he said:



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

"Tell Sam I'm going to die pretty soon, but that I love him; that I've loved him all my life and I'll love him till I die. This is the last word I'll ever send him."

I returned by way of New Orleans and the Mississippi River, for I wished to follow that abandoned water highway and to visit its presiding genius, Horace Bixby, then still alive and in service as pilot of the government's snag boat, with headquarters at St. Louis.<sup>1</sup>

Coming up the river on one of the old passenger steamboats, I noticed in a paper that came aboard that Mark Twain was to receive from Oxford University the literary doctor's degree. It seemed almost too sudden and too good to be true. That the little barefoot lad who had played along the river banks at Hannibal—whose highest ambition had been to become a river pilot—was about to be crowned by the world's foremost institution of learning, to receive the highest recognition for achievement in the world of letters, was a thing not likely to happen outside of a fairy tale.

It was all true, however, and I found Clemens quietly elated by the prospect, which had come to him as a great surprise.

"I never expected to cross the water again," he said, "but I would be willing to journey to Mars for that Oxford degree." Then he put the matter aside, to talk of the old friends I had visited, and especially of Jim Gillis, so near to his journey's end.

<sup>1</sup> He died August 2, 1912, at the age of eighty-six.

## LXX

### THE DEGREE FROM OXFORD

HE sailed on the 8th of June, 1907, exactly forty years from the day he had sailed on the *Quaker City*, to win his greater fame. He was absent six weeks—a period of continuous triumph. England never gave a more splendid welcome to any private citizen; the demonstration of affection and honor, which began with the moment of his arrival, did not cease while he was on British soil. His former London visits had been distinguished by high attentions, but all of them combined could not equal what happened now. He was entertained by clubs and by the highest officials of Church and State. A dinner was given him by the staff of London *Punch* in the historic editorial rooms, where no foreigner had ever sat before. He was received with special favor at the King's garden party; he traveled by a royal train; crowds gathered everywhere to see him pass. At Oxford, when he showed himself on the street, the name Mark Twain ran up and down like a cry of fire and the people came running. When he appeared on the stage of the Sheldonian Theater to receive his degree, clad in his doctor's robe of scarlet and gray, there developed suddenly what the English papers referred to as a "cyclone"—the shouting of the undergraduates for the boy who had been Tom Sawyer and played with Huckleberry Finn.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

He came home, and I was summoned to "come down and play billiards." His ship had arrived somewhat earlier than it had been expected, so I had not been on hand to greet him.

I confess I went with a certain degree of awe, overwhelmed, as it were, with the echoes of his great triumph—prepared to sit a good way off in silence and listen to the tale of the returning hero. But when I arrived he was already in the billiard room, knocking the balls about—his coat off, for it was a hot night. As I stepped in the door he said: "Get your cue. I've been inventing a new game."

That was all. The pageant was over; the curtain was rung down; business was resumed at the old stand.

There followed another winter, during which I was much with Mark Twain, though a part of it he spent in Bermuda with Mr. Rogers, whom he persuaded to try that lovely island resort. There was much billiards that winter, and sometimes we played almost the night through; but never did I know him to show any sign of weariness, though he was seventy-two years old now, an age at which most men find their muscles less elastic and enduring. Ready to drop in my tracks, I sometimes begged for respite, whereupon he would taunt me with my youth and add, "You don't sleep enough," a statement with which I was willing to agree, and I sometimes made an excuse to slip away for a day or two to repair that need.

The literary event of that winter was the publication in *Harper's Magazine* of a story which Mark

## THE DEGREE FROM OXFORD

Twain had written some forty years before—a burlesque on the orthodox idea of the hereafter, entitled “Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven.” Of his unpublished manuscripts it had always been his favorite, and he had often been tempted to print it, restrained partly by Mrs. Clemens’s disapproval, partly by his own wish not to wound a vast number of well-meaning, even if misguided, persons. But times had changed now. It was no longer regarded as blasphemous to speak lightly of hell, or even to suggest that the golden streets and jeweled architecture of the sky might be regarded as symbols of hope rather than exhibits of actual bullion and lapidary construction. The “Visit to Heaven” apparently damaged nobody. If there were any readers who were shocked by it they did not say so.

Mark Twain often allowed his fancy to play with the idea of the orthodox heaven, its curiosities of architecture, its employments of continuous prayer, psalm singing, and harpistry.

“What a childish notion it was,” he said, “and how curious that only a little while ago human beings were so willing to accept such fragile evidences about a place of so much importance. . . . As to the hereafter, we have not the slightest evidence that there is any—*no* evidence that appeals to logic or reason. I have never seen what to me seemed an atom of proof that there is a future life.” Then after a long pause he added, “And yet—I am strongly inclined to expect one.”

## LXXI

### THE NEW HOME

THE new home at Redding, on which work had been going forward for something more than a year, was finished and ready for occupancy in June. Mark Twain had never seen it, not even the land I had bought for him, and had given only the most casual attention to the plans and schemes for furnishing. He had specified only that the billiard room be red—mainly for the reason, I think, that his former billiard room had been red, an association not lightly to be disregarded. Another requirement was that the place should be complete. "I don't want to see it," he said, "until the cat is purring on the hearth."

Details wearied him, sometimes they exasperated him, and he was tired of so many of the phases of life. I think he enjoyed the thought of walking into a home that had been conjured into existence as with a word.

It was the 18th of June, 1908, that Mark Twain took possession of his new home. The Fifth Avenue house was not dismantled, for in the beginning it was the plan to use the Redding place for summer only. The servants, however, with one exception, had been transferred the week before, and Clemens and I had remained alone, though not lonely, in the city house,

## THE NEW HOME

playing billiards most of the time. He seldom mentioned the impending change, and I think gave the matter little thought. He had never seen even a photograph of the place, and I confess I had moments of anxiety. I did not really worry, for I knew how beautiful and peaceful it all was.

The morning of the 18th was bright and sunny and cool. Mark Twain was up and shaved by six o'clock, in order to be in time, though the train did not leave until four in the afternoon. Probably his chief idea was an early start at billiards.

We had no interruptions, and were still playing when word was brought up that the cab was waiting. He wore his creamy flannels and a Panama hat, and at the station a group quickly collected, reporters and others, to speed him to his new home.

The quick train, the gay, flying landscape, with glimpses of the Sound and white sails, the hillsides and clear streams becoming rapidly steeper and clearer as we turned northward, all seemed to gratify him. The hour and a half required to cover the sixty miles of distance passed very quickly. As the train slowed down for the Redding station, and the train porters came for the bags, he drew from his pocket a great handful of silver.

"Give them something," he said; "give everybody liberally that does any service."

There was a sort of open-air reception in waiting. A varied assemblage of vehicles (horse-drawn vehicles in that day), all festooned with flowers, had gathered to offer gallant country welcome.

It was now a little before six o'clock of that long

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

June day—still and dreamlike—and there was something which was not quite reality in the scene. The people did not cheer; they smiled and waved to the white figure, and he smiled and waved a reply, but there was no noise. It was like a scene in a cinema.

His carriage led away on the three-mile drive to the house on the hilltop; the floral procession fell in behind. Hillsides were green, fields were white with daisies, dogwood and laurel shone among the trees. He was very quiet as we drove along. Once with gentle humor, looking out over a white daisy field, he said:

“That is buckwheat. I always recognize buckwheat when I see it. I wish I knew as much about other things as I know about buckwheat. It seems to be very plentiful here; it even grows by the roadside.”

The water was flowing over the milldam where the road crossed Saugatuck, and a little farther along a brook cascaded down the hillside. These were pleasing things to him, and as we entered the leafy way that led to his new home he said:

“This is just the kind of a lane I like.”

The last of the procession had dropped away at the entrance of the lane and he was alone with those who had most anxiety for his verdict. The carriage ascended still higher, the view opened across the Saugatuck Valley, with its cozy church spire, its farmhouses, and the distant blue hills. Then came the house, simple in design, but beautiful—an Italian villa such as he had known in Florence, adapted here to American climate and needs. Around it

## THE NEW HOME

waved green grass, and there were beds of blooming flowers. At the entrance his domestic staff waited to greet him; then presently he stepped across the threshold and stood in his own home for the first time in seventeen years. Nothing was lacking—all was as completely furnished as if he had occupied it for a lifetime.

It was an anxious moment and no one spoke immediately. But when his eyes had taken in the harmony of the place, followed on through the wide doors that led to the dining room, on through the open French windows to the vista of treetops and farmside, he said, very gently:

"How beautiful it all is! I did not think it could be as beautiful as this."

And later, when he had seen all the rooms, including the splendid, glowing billiard room, which was saved for the last, he said:

"It is a perfect house—perfect, so far as I can see, in every detail. It might have been here always."

He was at home there from that moment. To see him bending over the billiard table five minutes later, one could easily fancy that Mark Twain, as well as the house, had been there always.

There were guests that first evening—a small home dinner party—and so perfect were the appointments and service that one not knowing would hardly have imagined it to be the first dinner served in that lovely room. A little later, at the foot of the garden, neighbors inspired by Dan Beard, who had recently located in Redding, set off some fireworks.



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain stepped out on the terrace, where rockets were climbing through the sky to announce his arrival.

"I wonder why they all go to so much trouble for me," he said, softly. "I never go to any trouble for anybody."

The evening closed with billiards—boisterous, triumphant billiards—and when at midnight the cues were set in the rack none could say that Mark Twain's first day in his new home had not been a happy one. Howells speaks of Mark Twain's "absolute content" with his new home, and these are the proper words to express it.

Nov. 30, 1908

I like the Joan of Arc book  
of all my books; & it is the best.  
I know it perfectly well. And  
besides, it furnished me seven  
times the pleasure afforded me by  
any of the others: 12 years of pre-  
paration & 2 years of writing.  
The others needed no preparation,  
& got none.

Mark Twain

MARK TWAIN'S LAST OPINION OF HIS BOOKS WRITTEN ON HIS  
73RD BIRTHDAY

## LXXII

### LIFE AT "STORMFIELD"

I REMEMBER Mark Twain's first week at "Stormfield" as a very beautiful one. We had feared that he might be lonely, but he promptly provided company for himself in the person of Colonel Harvey's little daughter, Dorothy, and my own daughter, Louise. They were about fourteen, and if there was any loneliness about the place it was not discoverable. Games of cards and billiards were in constant progress—all idea of work was forgotten. He had named the place "Innocence at Home," which certainly seemed appropriate during those first days of his occupancy. Somewhat later the name of "Stormfield" was adopted—for two reasons: The money received from "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" had been used to add a loggia, and then the summer storms that gathered on that rockbound, open hill—wild, fierce storms that bent the birch and cedar and strained at the bay and huckleberry—made the name "Stormfield" peculiarly appropriate.

Mark Twain was not dictating regularly now. He had piled up something like a half-million words of reminiscence and comment, and his first enthusiasm in that direction had waned. He liked the peaceful, incidental days, and, happy in his new content-

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

ment, very soon decided to make the place his permanent home.

I was not living at "Stormfield" at this period, but my house was only a short distance away and I went up daily for billiards. Sometimes when there were no guests we took long walks over the fields, frequently resting in some shady place. Generally at these times he talked—the subject growing out of any object or suggestion of the moment. He often spoke of the unseen forces of creation, the immutable laws that hold the planets in exact course and bring the years and the seasons always on schedule time. "The Great Law" was a phrase often on his lips. The exquisite foliage, the cloud shapes, the perfect formation of some tiny flower, the varieties of color everywhere—these were for him outward manifestations of "The Great Law" whose principle I understood to be unity—inter-relation throughout all nature.

Mark Twain interested himself in the affairs and people of Redding. Soon after his arrival he gathered all the inhabitants of the countryside, neighbors of every quality, and threw open to them every part of the new house. It was a sort of gala day, and the rooms and the grounds were filled with visitors.

It was not very long after this that he conceived the idea of establishing a community library. He had a great quantity of surplus books, and there was a small, unused church in West Redding, suitable for library purposes. The matter was not delayed. Shelving was erected, the books put in place, and

## LIFE AT "STORMFIELD"

the library duly opened. In the speech which he made on that occasion he said:

"I am glad to help this library. We get our morals from books. I didn't get mine from books, but I know that morals do come from books—theoretically, at least. . . . I am going to help build that library [a proposed new building] with contributions—from my visitors. Every male guest who comes to my house will have to contribute a dollar or go away without his baggage."

There was a stenographer who lived in the neighborhood, and Clemens continued his dictation at intervals. He also did considerable writing, mainly for his own amusement, though he finished one small book for publication, *Is Shakespeare Dead?*

Winter came. The walks were fewer and there was a good deal of company. The house was gay and the billiard games protracted. In February I made a trip to Europe and the Mediterranean, to follow in part the footsteps of *The Innocents Abroad*. Returning in April, I found him somewhat changed. It was not that he had grown older or less full of life, but only less active, less eager for gay company, and he no longer dictated, or very rarely. His daughter Jean, who had been in a health resort, was coming home to act as his secretary, which made him very happy.

It was about this time that Mark Twain's loyal friend, Henry H. Rogers, suddenly died. It was a heavy blow to him, and may have had something to do with the almost immediate development of the malady which a year later would bring his own life to its close.

## LXXIII

### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

THE first symptom of this trouble manifested itself during a trip which we made to Baltimore in June. Clemens had gone there for the purpose of making an address at the Commencement exercises of a girls' school, and I had never known him to be in a gayer mood than he was on the train. But at the hotel he complained of weariness and lay down for a little, to read. By and by he got up and began walking slowly to and fro. He stopped, facing me, and placed his hand upon his breast, saying:

"I think I must have caught a little cold yesterday on that Fifth Avenue stage. I have a curious pain in my breast."

He was fond of riding on the top of the stages, and the day before had been chilly. I thought it not unlikely that he had taken cold, and suggested that he lie down again. The pain passed away, and by and by he got up and walked about, talking amusingly. He paused all at once, and again laying his hand on his breast, said:

"That pain has come back. It is a curious, sickening, deadly kind of pain. I never had anything just like it."

It seemed to me that his face had become rather gray. I said, "Where is it exactly, Mr. Clemens?"

## THE BEGINNING OF THE END

He placed his hand in the center of his breast and said, "It is here, and it is very peculiar indeed."

Remotely in my mind occurred the thought that he had located his heart, and the "peculiar, deadly pain" he had mentioned seemed ominous. A hot-water bag relieved it and this time it had apparently gone to stay, for it did not return while we were in Baltimore. He made the address at St. Timothy's School, and we returned happily to "Stormfield."

I was there pretty constantly during the rest of that year. At first I went up only for the day, but later, when his health did not improve, when "the breast pains" returned and he expressed a wish for companionship evenings, I remained most of the nights, as well. Dr. Edward Quintard came up from New York, and did not hesitate to say that the trouble proceeded from the heart. He counseled diminished smoking, with less active exercise, advising particularly against Clemens's lifetime habit of lightly skipping up and down stairs. There was no prohibition as to billiards or leisurely walking, and we played pretty steadily through those peaceful days or went down into the meadows, though he leaned on me a good deal, something which he had not done before. On one of these walks I pointed out a little corner of land which earlier he had given me to straighten out our division line. I told him I was going to build a study on it and call it "Markland." He seemed pleased; later he said:

"If you had a place for that extra billiard table of mine [the Rogers table,] I would turn it over to you."

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

I replied that I could adapt the size of my proposed study to fit a billiard table, and he said:

"Now that will be very good. Then when I want exercise I can walk down and play billiards with you, and when you want exercise you can walk up and play with me. You must build that study."

The pains came with increasing frequency and severity. It must have been a cruel pain, but he never complained, and at billiards he would go on playing in his turn. We had found that a glass of very hot water relieved it and we kept a thermos bottle or two filled and ready. Sometimes the relief came quickly, but there were times when that deadly gripping did not soon release him.

We were alone together most of the time. Our rooms were only separated by a bathroom, and as neither of us was much given to sleep, there was likely to be talk or reading aloud at almost any hour when both were awake. Sometimes in the early morning, when he thought I might be stirring, he would call softly, but loudly enough for me to hear if awake, and I would go in and we would settle again problems of life and death and science, or, rather, he would settle them while I dropped in a remark here and there, merely to hold the matter a little longer in solution. So it came about that there could hardly have been closer companionship than was ours during this the last year of Mark Twain's life. For me, of course, nothing can ever be like it again in this world. One is not likely to associate twice with a being from another star.

## LXXIV

### THE DEATH OF JEAN

THE wedding of Clara Clemens to Ossip Gabrilowitsch, the Russian pianist, occurred in October, and the young people presently sailed for Europe, which was to be their home. This marriage made Mark Twain very happy. He had known and admired Gabrilowitsch since the days in Vienna, ten years before. Furthermore, he doubtless had the feeling that his own life was drawing to a close and he was anxious to see his children settled and cared for.

Jean Clemens was now the head of the house, and, what with her secretarial work and her uncertain health, the burden was too heavy. She had a passion for animal life of every kind, and in some farm buildings at one corner of the estate had set up quite an establishment of chickens and domestic animals. She was fond of giving these her personal attention. And this with her other responsibilities gave her little time for rest. Her condition did not seem critical, but the thought of her future was a matter of deep anxiety to her father.

November came, and the dull, chilly days had a tendency to aggravate Clemens's malady. The breast pains became very severe. The warm air of Bermuda was prescribed for him, and on the 19th



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

we sailed for a month's holiday. On the eve of sailing we received the news of the death of two of Mark Twain's old and faithful friends, William M. Laffan of the *Sun* and Richard Watson Gilder of the *Century Magazine*. Clemens received the news quietly. He had been thinking of Laffan, he said, mentally writing a letter to him. He added:

"Gilder and Laffan get all the good things that come along, and I never get anything." Never during my acquaintance with him did he manifest any feeling toward death but that of friendliness.

Most of the Bermuda visit Mark Twain spent at the home of the vice-consul, Mr. William H. Allen, Bayhouse, a beautiful place on the water's edge. It was a quiet, congenial environment, and little Helen Allen proved a charming playmate. There were drives each afternoon, along the south shore and elsewhere, especially to Devonshire Bay, where the sea was unbelievably brilliant. His health improved in that balmy air and the pains troubled him but little.

His seventy-fourth birthday (November 30, 1909) found him looking wonderfully well, his face full of color and freshness, his eyes bright, keen, and full of good humor. It was rather gloomy outside, so we remained indoors, playing games, reading, and talking. Once in the midst of something he forgot a word and denounced his poor memory.

"I'll forget the Lord's middle name, sometime," he declared, "right in the midst of a storm when I need all the help I can get."

Later he said, "Nobody dreamed, seventy-four

## THE DEATH OF JEAN

years ago to-day that I would be in Bermuda now." And I thought he meant a good deal more than the words conveyed.

We sailed for America on the 18th of December, arriving on the 20th. Jean was at the wharf to meet us, blue and shivering with the cold. It was wretchedly bleak there, and I had the feeling that she should not have come.

On the 23d I was lunching with Jean, who was full of interest in her Christmas preparations. She had a handsome tree set up in the loggia, with packages piled around it. She had forgotten nobody, and I could see that, what with her many duties and her Christmas plans, she was under a considerable strain. I suggested that for a time at least I might assume a part of her burden, to which, however, she would not consent. I was to remain at my own home that night, and as I left "Stormfield" I passed Jean on the stair. She said cheerfully that she felt a little tired and was going to lie down. I never saw her alive again. I was at breakfast next morning when word was brought in that one of the men from "Stormfield" was outside and wished to see me. When I went out he said:

"Miss Jean is dead. They have just found her in the bathroom. Mr. Clemens sent me to bring you."

In her debilitated condition the shock of a cold bath had been too much for her. Her heart had stopped beating. I learned this as we drove up the hill. When I entered Clemens's room he looked at me helplessly and said:

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

"Well, I suppose you have heard of this final disaster."

He was not violent or broken down with grief. For many years Jean had been subject to that incurable malady, epilepsy, and even in the first moment of his loss he realized that there was no longer the dreaded prospect of leaving her behind. He had me cable the Gabrilowitsches in Europe the facts, and tell them not to come. A little later he asked me if we would close our house for the winter and occupy "Stormfield." He would go back to Bermuda, he said, but he wished the house kept open, so it would be ready for him at any time. We assented, of course, for there was no thought among any of his friends but for his comfort and peace of mind. Young Jarvis Langdon was summoned from Elmira, to take Jean there, where she would lie with the others.

Clemens remained for the most part in his room. Once when I went in he said:

"I have been looking in at Jean, and envying her. I have never greatly envied anyone but the dead. I always envy the dead."

He went in to look at her Christmas tree "drenched," as he said, with tinsel and piled all about with gifts, and to her room where other heaps of gifts lay on the chairs and on her desk. Among them, for himself, was a handsome globe. During the afternoon I found him writing:

"I am setting it down," he said, "everything; it is a relief to me to write it. It furnishes me an excuse for thinking."

## THE DEATH OF JEAN

He continued writing most of the day, and at intervals during the next day and the next.

At six o'clock in the evening of Christmas Day they set out with Jean on her last journey. Clemens, who was unable to travel to Elmira and did not have the strength to be near Jean at the parting, asked me to play a Schubert Impromptu, which had been her favorite music, when the moment came to take the coffin away. He asked me to continue with the Intermezzo from the "Cavalleria," in memory of Susy, and with the Largo, for Mrs. Clemens. He said:

"When I hear the music I shall know they are starting. Tell them to set lanterns at the door, so I can look down and see them go."

So I sat at the organ and began playing as they lifted and bore her away. A soft, heavy snow was falling and the gloom of those shortest days was closing in. There was not the least wind or noise. The whole world was muffled. The lanterns sent their glow into the thickly falling flakes. The little group at the door saw him come to the window above, the light on his white hair as he stood gazing down, watching Jean going away from him for the last time.

I played steadily on, as he had instructed. When I had finished I went up and found him.

"Poor little Jean!" he said, "but for her it is so good to go."

In his own story of it he wrote:

From my windows I saw the hearse and the carriages wind along the road and gradually grow vague and spectral in the falling snow, and presently disappear. Jean was gone out of

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

my life, and would not come back any more. The cousin she had played with, when they were babies together—he and her beloved old Katie—were conducting her to her distant childhood home, where she will lie by her mother's side once more, in the company of Susy and Langdon.

Next day the storm had turned into a fearful blizzard. The whole hilltop was a raging, driving mass of white. Once during the afternoon he said:

“Jean always so loved to see a storm like this, and just now at Elmira they are burying her.”

And in the story:

It is the time appointed. The funeral has begun. Four hundred miles away, but I can see it all, just as if I were there. The scene is the library in the Langdon homestead. Jean's coffin stands where her mother and I stood, forty years ago, and were married; and where Susy's coffin stood thirteen years ago; where her mother's stood five and a half years ago; and where mine shall stand, after a little time.

It was that evening that he came into the room where Mrs. Paine and I sat by the fire, bringing his manuscript.

“I have finished my story of Jean's death,” he said. “It is the end of my autobiography. I shall never write any more. I can't judge myself at all. One of you read it aloud to the other and let me know what you think of it. If it is worthy, perhaps some day it may be published.”

“The Death of Jean” is one of the rarest pieces of elegiac writing in the language, and it was thoroughly in keeping with his entire career that he should thus, in this unique and dramatic manner, bring it to a close.

## LXXV

### THE RETURN TO BERMUDA, AND HOME

SOMETHING more than a week later Mark Twain returned to his good friends, the Allens, in Bermuda, and remained with them during the rest of that winter. The eve of sailing he spent in the home of relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Edward E. Loomis. William Dean Howells came in and the talk was of many things. It was the last evening the two friends would ever spend together.

The warm airs of Bermuda were, as always, kindly to Mark Twain, and for a time he seemed to improve. He sent letters to me by every ship, generally echoes of his pleasant days. Once he wrote:

Life continues here the same as usual. There isn't a fault in it—good times, good home, tranquil contentment all day and every day without a break.

This was near the end of January, and through March his reports continued in the same spirit, always full of humor, often of plans for days ahead. But near the end of March he spoke of coming home. He had engaged passage, he said for April 23d:

But don't tell anybody. I don't want it known. I may have to go sooner if the pain in my breast does not mend its ways pretty considerable. I don't want to die here, for this is an unkind place for a person in that condition. I should have

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

to lie in the undertaker's cellar until the ship would remove me. And it's dark down there and unpleasant. . . . I am growing more and more particular about the place.

Three days later he wrote that he was having a most uncomfortable time with the breast pains, and the same mail brought me a letter from Mr. Allen, who frankly stated that his condition had become very serious indeed. This was on April 1st. On the same day I went to New York, and consulted with Doctor Quintard, who provided me with some opiates and instructed me in the use of the hypodermic needle. He also joined me in a cablegram to the Gabrilowitsches, advising them to sail without delay.

I sent no word to Bermuda that I was coming, and no one at Bay House was expecting me. The doors were all open and I entered without knocking, passing through to the room occupied by Mark Twain. He was sitting alone, in a large chair, clad in the familiar dressing gown. He was not yet shaven and seemed unnaturally pale, I thought. Certainly he was much thinner. When he turned and saw me he seemed a little dazed.

"Why," he said, holding out his hand, "you did not tell us that you were coming!"

"No," I answered, "it is rather sudden. I didn't quite like the sound of your last letters."

"But those were not serious," he protested. "You shouldn't have come on *my* account."

I said, then, that I had come on my own account; that I had felt the need of recreation and had decided to run down and come home with him.

## THE RETURN TO BERMUDA

"That's—very—good," he said, in his slow, gentle fashion. "*Now* I'm glad to see you."

His breakfast came in and he ate with appetite. When he had been shaved and freshly propped in his pillows it seemed to me that I must have been mistaken in thinking him so changed. His color was fine, his eyes were bright, he seemed only thinner. He spoke of the fierce pains he had gone through and how he had been given hypodermic injections, which he amusingly termed "hypnotic injunctions" and "subcutaneous applications," having his humor out of it, as of course he must have even though death should stand there in person.

He seemed so little like a man whose days were numbered. We drove out that afternoon and he discussed the old subjects in the old way. He spoke, too, of the Redding Library. I had sold for him the farm where Jean had kept her animals, and he wished to use the six thousand dollars received for it to erect some sort of memorial to Jean. I suggested the new library building, already somewhat considered. He at once fell in with the idea and asked me to write his lawyer, Mr. Lark, and have a paper prepared, naming trustees for the fund.

The pains did not trouble him again for several days, but he remained quietly at the house and did not drive out again. For the most part he sat in bed, reading or smoking as in the old days, apparently full of vigor and the joy of life.

He had really written nothing in Bermuda, doing only a little playful scribbling—some valentines for Helen, and some amusing paragraphs of "last ad-



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

vice"—for me, as he confessed—what I was to do on reaching the gate of which St. Peter is said to keep the key. As it is the last writing he ever did, and because it is characteristic, a few paragraphs are here included:

Upon arrival do not speak to St. Peter until spoken to. It is not your place to begin.

Do not begin any remark with "say."

When applying for a ticket avoid trying to make conversation. If you *must* talk, let the weather alone. St. Peter cares not a damn for the weather. And don't ask him what time the 4.30 train goes; there aren't any trains in heaven, except through trains, and the less information you get about them the better for you.

You can ask him for his autograph—there is no harm in that—but be careful and don't remark that it is one of the penalties of greatness. He has heard *that* before.

Don't try to kodak him. Hell is full of people who *have* made that mistake.

Leave your dog outside. Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit you would stay out and the dog would go in.

There were several pages of this counsel.

I spent most of each day with him, merely sitting by the bed and reading, while he himself read or dozed. I noticed, when he slept, that his breathing was difficult, and I could see that he did not improve. Yet each evening would find him gay, and it pleased him to have the entire family gather around, while he became really hilarious over the happenings of the day.

There came a hard night. The doctor was summoned and repeated injections of morphine were required to ease the pain. In the early morning I found him sitting in his chair, trying to sing, after

## THE RETURN TO BERMUDA

his old morning habit. He took my hand and said:

"Well, I had a picturesque night; every pain I had was on exhibition." He quoted a line of poetry and commented on it; then he said: "I must watch for the *Bermudian* and see if she salutes. The captain knows I am herè, sick, and he blows two short whistles just as they come up behind that little island. Those are for me."

The *Bermudian* was the New York boat, and her arrival was always on schedule time. She came down the bay presently, her bright-red stacks towering vividly above the green island. He watched her anxiously and without speaking. Suddenly there were two white puffs of steam, and two short, deep notes went up from her.

"Those are for me," he said. "Captain Fraser does not forget me."

Mr. Allen engaged our passage for the 12th, but it began to look as if our patient would not be able to stand the trip. The 11th, however, brought marked improvement. He was so much better that I thought if he could get out of that humid air and into the high altitude of "Stormfield" he might easily survive the summer.

That night he was unusually merry. After we left him he felt wakeful and slipped out on the veranda, where we found him marching up and down as unconcerned as if he were not an invalid at all. He said he thought the exercise would do him good. Perhaps it did, for he slept soundly that night—a great blessing.

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

The Allen home stands directly on the water and Mr. Allen had chartered a tug to take us to the ship. We were obliged to start early, and the fresh morning breeze was stimulating. Arriving at the ship, the sailors carried him in a canvas chair up the stairway and to his stateroom. Then presently we sailed away.

As long as I remember anything, I shall remember the forty-eight hours of that homeward voyage. At first he seemed comfortable, and asked for a catalogue of the ship's library. But then we ran into the more oppressive air of the Gulf Stream and his breathing, at first difficult, soon became next to impossible. It was only a step to the main deck, and no passengers were there. I had Claude, his valet, bring a steamer chair, and we supported him into it and bundled him with rugs. But his breathing there was worse, if anything, than before. It seemed to me that the end might come at any moment, and this thought was in his own mind, for once, in the struggle for air, he managed to say:

"I am going. I shall be gone in a moment."

Breath came, but I realized that even his cabin was better than this. I steadied him back to his berth and shut out most of that deadly dampness. He asked for the "hypnotic injunction," for his humor never left him, and though it was not yet the hour prescribed, I could not deny it. It was impossible for him to lie down, even to recline, without great distress. The opiate made him drowsy, but the devil of suffocation was always lying in wait to bring him back for fresh tortures. When he could

## THE RETURN TO BERMUDA

no longer stay in his berth, I steadied him on his feet or in a sitting posture on the couch opposite the berth.

In spite of his suffering, two dominant characteristics remained—his sense of humor and tender consideration for another. Once when the ship rolled and his hat fell from the hook and made the circuit of the cabin floor, he said:

"The ship is passing the hat." And again: "I am sorry for you, Paine, but I can't help it. I can't hurry this dying business. Can't you give me enough of the hypnotic injunctions to put an end to me?"

As I looked at him there, so reduced in his estate, I could not but remember all the labor of his years and all the splendid honor which the world had paid him. Something of this may have entered his mind, too. For once when I offered him some of the milder remedies which we had brought he said:

"After forty years of public effort I have become just a target for medicines." And a little later, "Oh, it is such a mystery, and it takes so long!"

It has been written—I do not know with what proof—that certain great dissenters have recanted with the approach of death—have become weak and afraid to ignore old traditions in the face of that great mystery. I wish to write here that Mark Twain, as he neared the end, showed never a single tremor of fear or even of reluctance. If I have dwelt somewhat upon these moments when suffering was upon him and death the imminent shadow, it is to show that at the end he was as he had always

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

been, neither more nor less, and never less than brave.

Somehow those two days and nights went by. Once, when he was partially relieved by the opiate, I slept while Claude watched, and again in the fading end of the last night, when we had passed at length into the cool, bracing northern air and breath had come back to him, and with it sleep.

Relatives, physicians, and news gatherers were at the dock to welcome him. An invalid carriage had been provided, and a compartment secured on the afternoon train to Redding—the same train that had taken us there two years before. He apparently suffered not at all during the journey, and on that still, sweet April evening we drove to "Stormfield," much as we had driven there the first time. As we turned into the lane that led up the hill he said:

"Can we see where you have built your billiard room?"

The gables showed above the trees and I pointed it out to him.

"It looks quite imposing," he said.

I think it was the last outside interest he ever showed in anything.

Arriving at "Stormfield," he stepped unassisted from the carriage, to greet the members of the household, assembled to welcome him, and with all his old courtliness offered each his hand. Then, in the canvas chair we had brought, we carried him upstairs to his room—the big beautiful room that looked out to the sunset hills. This was Thursday evening, April 14, 1910.

## LXXVI

### •THE ENVIED ESTATE

MARK TWAIN just lived a week from that day and hour. For a time he seemed full of life, talking freely and suffering little. Clara and Ossip Gabrilowitsch arrived on Saturday, and found him cheerful, quite like himself. The physicians denied him the morphine, now, and once when I went in he said, rather mournfully:

"They won't give me the subcutaneous any more."

At intervals he read. Two old favorites, the *Twelve Cæsars of Suetonius* and Carlyle's *French Revolution*, lay on the bed beside him, and he would pick them up and read a page or a paragraph. Sometimes when I saw him thus, the high color still in his face, the clear light in his eyes, I said, "It is not reality; he is not going to die."

The news of his condition, everywhere published, brought great heaps of letters, and a few of these messages were reported to him. He talked at intervals, much in the old way, commenting sometimes on the aspects of his malady. Once he said:

"It is singular, very singular, the laws of mentality—vacuity. I put out my hand to reach a book or newspaper which I have been reading most glibly, and it isn't there, not a suggestion of it."

## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

It became clear presently that he was failing. On the Wednesday following our arrival his mind wandered a little, his speech became less articulate.

A year earlier, during one of his talks on astronomy, a subject which he loved, he had said to me:

"I came in with Halley's comet in 1835. It is coming again next year and I expect to go out with it. It will be the greatest disappointment of my life if I don't go out with Halley's comet."

He was not to be disappointed. We did not know it then, but on Wednesday night the mysterious messenger of his birth year became visible in the sky.

His mind was still fairly clear next morning and he sent word by Clara that he wished to see me. When I came he spoke of two unfinished manuscripts which he wished me to "throw away," as he briefly expressed it, for his words were few now and uncertain. I assured him that I would attend to the matter and he pressed my hand. It was his last word to me. The nurses told me that he had tried to read a little, from the *Suetonius* or from one of the volumes of Carlyle.

Somewhat after midday, when Clara was by him, he roused up and took her hand, and seemed to speak with less effort.

"Good-by," he said. And Doctor Quintard, who was standing near, thought he added, "If we meet," but the words were very faint.

He looked at her for a little while, then sank into a doze, and from it passed into a deeper slumber, and did not heed us any more.

Through that peaceful spring afternoon the life

## THE ENVIED ESTATE

wave ebbed lower and lower. It was about half past six and the sun just lay on the horizon when Doctor Quintard noticed that the breathing, which had gradually become more subdued, broke a little. There was no suggestion of any struggle. The noble head turned a little to one side,—the breath that had been unceasing through seventy-four tumultuous years had stopped forever.

He had entered into the estate envied so long. In his own words—the words of one of his latest memoranda—he had “arrived at the dignity of death—the only earthly dignity that is not artificial—the only safe one. The others are traps that can beguile to humiliation.

“Death—the only immortal who treats us all alike, whose pity and whose peace and whose refuge are for all—the soiled and the pure—the rich and the poor—the loved and the unloved.”

In the Brick Church of New York, Mark Twain, dressed in the white he loved so well, lay with the nobility of death upon him, while a multitude of those who loved him passed by and looked at his face for the last time. Flowers in profusion were banked about him, but on the casket lay a single wreath which Dan Beard and his wife had woven from the laurel which grows on “Stormfield” hill. He was never more beautiful than as he lay there, and it was an impressive scene to see those thousands file by, regard him for a moment gravely, thoughtfully, and pass on. All sorts were there—rich and poor; some crossed themselves, some saluted, some



## A SHORT LIFE OF MARK TWAIN

paused a little to take a closer look, but no one offered even to pick a flower.

Howells came, and in his book he says:

I looked a moment at the face I knew so well; and it was patient with the patience I had so often seen in it: something of a puzzle, a great silent dignity, an assent to what must be from the depths of a nature whose tragical seriousness broke in the laughter which the unwise took for the whole of him.

**THE END.**









